

**There is  
a time...  
and it is  
now!**

# Stop thinking about faith as a collection of **rules**

*It's the  
right time to...*

**Welcome new possibilities  
into our life**

*1<sup>st</sup> Sunday - 22 February*  
I set my bow in the clouds...  
a sign of the covenant  
between me and the earth.  
(Gn. 9:13)

**Discover God  
as our partner in life**

*2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday- 1 March*  
If God is for us, who can be  
against us? (Rm. 8:31b)

**Stop thinking about faith  
as a collection of rules**

*3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday - 8 March*  
Take these things out  
of here, and stop making  
my Father's house  
a marketplace! (Jn. 2:16)

**Illuminate our lives**

*4<sup>th</sup> Sunday- 15 March*  
Whoever lives the truth,  
comes to the light... (Jn. 3:21)

**Think of life as a gift of self**

*5<sup>th</sup> Sunday- 22 March*  
Unless a grain of wheat  
falls to the ground and dies,  
it remains just a single grain.  
(Jn. 12:24)

**Cast off fear and face  
our problems**

*Palm Sunday -29 March*  
Jesus gave a loud cry and  
breathed his last. The veil of  
the sanctuary was torn in two.  
(Mk. 15:37-38)

**Realize that the tomb  
is empty: the Lord is alive  
and goes before of us...**

*Easter Sunday - 5 April*  
Who will roll back the stone  
for us from the entrance  
to the tomb? (Mk. 16:3)

*Fr. Luca Pandolfi*

**Lent - 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday**  
Exodus 20:1-17; Psalm 19; 1 Corinthians 1:22-25; John 2:13-25

On the mountain, God spoke like parents speak to their children; like a wise person speaks to young people. His words were affectionate, tender, farseeing, and the horizon he pointed out leads to fullness of life.

On the mountain, God spoke to the hearts of his people. If he were saying the same thing to us today, his words might sound something like this: "Don't serve a lot of fake gods—idols that want to enslave you. If you decide to serve God, choose the One who wants you to be free, who is so involved in your life that he has liberated you from the chains of your oppressor. Don't use God to burden your life or the lives of others. Remember that he made the world free and he wants everyone to live that way. You, your family, the people with whom you work—you are all free, and the same is true of all creation. Take at least one day a week to enjoy a good rest and the joy of interacting with one another in a spirit of communion. Take care of your parents when they grow old. Don't harm anyone. Don't yearn for another person's possessions. Only a person who is not free is prompted to take what belongs to another. A free person never takes another's life; indeed, he/she gives his/her life for the other. If you follow this path, you will live differently from the way you lived in Egypt. If you refuse to follow this path, you will live in oppression wherever you go or, even worse, you will become the oppressor."

But were the hearts of the people ready to hear these words, which would lead them to interact with God and their brothers and sisters in a spirit of communion? No. The people immediately transformed God's words into commands, duties, rules: shackles to freedom, another form of oppression—this time not by Pharaoh (who considered himself a god) but by God himself. Failing to grasp the great teaching of freedom and failing to listen to God with the wisdom of their hearts, they began to look for shortcuts. They began to think that if a person were religious, then at times it could be useful to "use" the name of God; that rest was a luxury only for the rich; that the elderly and the poor could be ignored; that if a person were powerful enough he/she could steal and kill; and that if one wanted something, it was only right to try to get it. God's words, spoken from the heart, were transformed into "commandments" that children did not understand and that adults failed to respect.

Lent is a favorable time for us to stop thinking about our faith as a collection of rules with which to bargain with God. It is a favorable time to listen afresh to the Lord's tender words to us today.

*Prayer*  
**L**ord, at times we think of you as a trader:  
someone seeking to get something from us  
and take from us something we hold dear.  
**L**ord, at times we behave toward you like traders:  
seeking to get something from you  
and give you something in exchange,  
but trying our best to get what we want at a bargain or  
**L**ord, in one way or another, either gently or vigorously,  
help us dismantle this marketplace and our behavior.  
Help us rediscover the joy and serenity  
of interacting with one another in a family spirit,  
as friends among friends.