

## Monday of Holy Week

**“My Present for Jesus? A Heart Filled with Love”** (Regnum Christi Meditation for Monday of the Third Week of Advent by Father James Swanson, LC - Matthew 21:23-27– [Audio version](#))

Matthew 21:17-27 And leaving them, he went out of the city to Bethany, and there he spent the night. When he was going back to the city in the morning, he was hungry. Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went over to it, but found nothing on it except leaves. And he said to it, "May no fruit ever come from you again." And immediately the fig tree withered. When the disciples saw this, they were amazed and said, "How was it that the fig tree withered immediately?" Jesus said to them in reply, "Amen, I say to you, if you have faith and do not waver, not only will you do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' it will be done. Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive." When he had come into the temple area, the chief priests and the elders of the people approached him as he was teaching and said, "By what authority are you doing these things? And who gave you this authority?" Jesus said to them in reply, "I shall ask you one question, and if you answer it for me, then I shall tell you by what authority I do these things. Where was John's baptism from? Was it of heavenly or of human origin?" They discussed this among themselves and said, "If we say 'Of heavenly origin,' he will say to us, 'Then why did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'Of human origin,' we fear the crowd, for they all regard John as a prophet." So they said to Jesus in reply, "We do not know." He himself said to them, "Neither shall I tell you by what authority I do these things.

**Introductory Prayer:** Lord, I believe in you, but not just with the assent of my mind. Since I believe in you, I commit my whole life into your loving hands. I know that you cannot deceive me or let me down, because you are goodness and mercy itself. I humbly offer you my love. Though I know it is so weak, I am certain, nevertheless, that my desire to love you more is pleasing to you.

**Petition:** Lord, help me to grow in my faith.

1. **A Faith That Manifests Itself in Deeds:** We are preparing for the coming of Jesus. Where does he come from? What is his origin? Like the Pharisees, many people today try to dodge this uncomfortable question. If we asked them right out, “Do you believe?” They might very well say, “Yes.” But their lives tell another story. They don’t do anything, or at best, they do the minimum to follow Jesus. If Jesus were only a human being, it would be fine to follow him half-heartedly, accommodating what he taught in order to make it more suitable to ourselves. But if he is really sent by God, then none of us has the authority to change or water down anything he taught. Our lives should be a clear reflection of everything Jesus

taught, insofar as we know his teachings and are capable of putting them into practice. Is that what my life shows? Does it clearly witness to my belief that Jesus is from heaven—that he was sent by God?

2. **A Faith That Comes From the Heart:** The way the Pharisees followed the Law seemed to be faultless, or at least it seemed much closer to being faultless than the lives of the other Jews. The Pharisees even went so far as to add many rules of their own to make sure they never even came close to breaking the rules God gave the Jewish People. It would seem that their lives did give testimony to their firm belief in the Messiah. Yet, when the Messiah appeared, they missed out. They didn't recognize him. What happened? While their lives gave testimony to their beliefs, their hearts were not filled with the necessary love for God. They were unable to recognize the Messiah; rather, they were filled with self-love. They did the right things for the wrong reasons — selfishness or seeking the esteem of others. In short, they had the wrong attitude. Is this my kind of Christianity? Do I act “correctly,” but out of selfishness or some other unworthy motive?
3. **A Faith That Grows Stronger at Mary's Side:** To prepare well for Christ's coming I would do well to ask Mary for her help. She prepared herself for nine months for the first coming of Jesus, and she did an excellent job. She can help me. If I haven't asked her for her help yet this Advent, there is still time to do so.

**Conversation with Christ:** Jesus, I am sorry for the poor way I put my faith into practice. I am even sorer that when I do act in accordance with your teachings, all too often my attitude is wrong. I don't practice your teachings according to love for you, but according to my selfishness, concern for the approval of others or comfort. Help me to correct my attitude; help me to live with more love each day; help me to imitate more closely the way of life you taught me by your words and example.

**Resolution:** I will examine my attitudes to see if my actions really do speak of love for Christ, or if my own interests are ruling my life. Then, during the day I will choose something that is hard for me and try to do it well and out of love for Jesus Christ.

*\*The Gospel read in the Maronite Church on Monday of Holy week of Great Lent is Matthew 21:17-27 while the audio version and the meditation above are based on Matthew 21:23-27*