



27. February 2026
LENTEN SPIRITUAL RETREAT
Day 10: “Valuable reminders”

In today's reading (Ezekiel 18:20–28), the Lord faces a dispute with His people, who accuse Him of being unjust. What is the reason? The Lord explains:

"But if a wicked man turns away from all his sins which he has committed and keeps all my statutes and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; for the righteousness which he has done he shall live. Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, says the Lord God, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live? But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity and does the same abominable things that the wicked man does, shall he live? None of the righteous deeds which he has done shall be remembered; for the treachery of which he is guilty and the sin he has committed, he shall die." (Ezekiel 18:21–24)

Obviously, the Jews did not agree with these statements, for the Lord says through the prophet: *"Yet the house of Israel says, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' O house of Israel, are my ways not just? Is it not your ways that are not just?"* (Ezekiel 18:29)

But what the Lord makes clear remains true: those who do not repent will die in their sins, but those who repent will live. The latter will be saved, *"because he considered and turned away from all the transgressions which he had committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die."* (Ezekiel 18:28)

On our journey of conversion, this passage from the prophet Ezekiel gives us a valuable reminder in two ways. If there is still anyone among us who is undecided, wavering between two sides, there is no time to lose in turning completely to God and leaving behind the paths of lukewarmness or even sin. Life is too serious and time too precious to waste, preventing God's love from penetrating our hearts and bearing fruit. We must not forget that faith put into practice is not just one option among many in life. Rather, it is life itself and the pledge of eternal life. On the other hand, when we do not follow God's path, we live in contradiction to the deepest meaning of our existence and even run the risk of condemning ourselves forever.

For those who have already seriously embarked on God's path, today's passage exhorts them to persevere and remain faithful to the end. For, as mentioned in the reading, it

can happen that one abandons the good path one had begun and dies outside of God's grace. No one should feel too secure: *"Therefore let any one who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall"* (1 Cor 10:12), lest it be said that he began well but ended badly.

In the Book of Revelation, the Lord addresses this reminder to the faithful church of Smyrna: *"Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life."* (Rev 2:10b) We could choose this phrase as a recurring prayer, asking the Lord for the grace to be faithful to Him until death.

In today's Gospel (cf. John 5, 1-15), we also encounter an almost incomprehensible dispute between God and His people. Jesus takes pity on a man who had been sick for thirty-eight years and was waiting by the pools of Bethesda for the miracle of healing to occur. But since he had no one to carry him to the waters when they were stirred by the descent of an angel of the Lord, and only the first one to enter the pool was healed, he had probably lost almost all hope.

In these circumstances, Jesus, the "Lord of the angels," saw his need and took pity on him, saying, *"rise, take up your pallet, and walk."* The man was instantly healed, took his pallet, and walked away.

In reality, this miracle should have been a cause for great joy. But it turned out that it was the Sabbath, and carrying a mat was considered work, which was forbidden on the "Lord's Day." Therefore, the Jews were scandalized and confronted the man. He told them his story, and since they wanted to know, he told them that it was Jesus who had healed him.

At this point, with the matter clarified, the Jews in question should have praised the Lord. However, far from rejoicing over the healing of this man who had suffered for so many years and recognizing that it was the work of God, they closed their hearts even more to Jesus. The Lord had invited them to understand, not only through the miraculous healing, but also by giving them the key in His answer: *"My Father is working still, and I am working."*

Unfortunately, the hearts of the hostile Pharisees were closing more and more, and the danger to the Lord was becoming increasingly real. It is alarming to see that precisely the Pharisees and scribes—who were considered pious by the people, or at least wanted to be recognized as such—closed themselves off to God's work. And we all know how far the hostility against Jesus went. They abused the commandment to keep the Sabbath holy—which in itself is very good and right—to accuse Jesus, who had to clarify: *"The*

sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath; so the Son of man is lord even of the sabbath.” (Mk 2:27–28)

As flowers from today’s meditation, let us keep the valuable reminders that emerge from today’s reading and Gospel: let us ask for perseverance and fidelity in following the Lord to the end, and that we may understand the hierarchy of God’s action without becoming legalistic where the Holy Spirit wants to broaden our vision.

Meditation on the reading of the day: <https://en.elijamission.net/2021/02/26/>

Meditation on the Gospel of the day: <https://en.elijamission.net/2024/06/13/>