



17. March 2026

LENTEN SPIRITUAL RETREAT

Day 28: “The word of Jesus comes from the Father”

Returning to the biblical texts that accompany us during Lent, we hear in today’s reading (Ex 32:7–14) how the Israelites fall into idolatry. Moses must listen to these words addressed to him by the Lord:

“And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Go down; for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves; they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them; they have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!’ And the Lord said to Moses, ‘I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people; now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; but of you I will make a great nation.’” (vv. 7–10).

Throughout their history, the Israelites were tempted again and again to worship false gods. That was one of the reasons why God wanted to keep them isolated from other peoples, so that they would not imitate their idolatrous practices, which are an abomination in God’s eyes. Sacred Scripture makes it clear that these “false gods” seek to usurp God’s place, and St. Paul teaches that demons hide behind idols to deceive people (cf. 1 Cor 10:19–20). To this day, they continue to work in various ways to turn people away from the knowledge of Christ.

Moses interceded for the people of Israel and persuaded the Lord not to carry out His plan: *“And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do to his people.”* (v. 14)

This story repeats itself over and over again. From the perspective of divine justice, humanity would on many occasions have deserved to suffer the consequences of its evil deeds. However, our Father repeatedly raises up people who intercede for others. In this case, it is Moses who intervenes on behalf of the people of Israel, thus foreshadowing the Messiah who will come to intercede for all humanity before the heavenly Father. Soon we will hear the incomparable words that our Lord cried out once and for all from the cross—words by which we all live: *“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”* (Lk 23:34)

But we have not yet reached that moment. In today’s Gospel (Jn 7:14–31), Jesus must confront the unbelief of the Jews. They were struck by the Lord’s knowledge of Sacred

Scripture. Like so many other things, they could not explain it, because Jesus did not speak like the other scribes. The Gospel of Saint Luke recounts that the people “*were astonished at his teaching, for his word was with authority.*” (Lk 4:32)

The Lord used the question about the origin of His knowledge to convey to them that, just as His authority did, His teaching came from the Heavenly Father, in whose Name He acted.

It is therefore no surprise that many were moved by Jesus’ words.

Indeed, when someone speaks the truth, their authority comes from that truth, which calls for a response from humanity, for humanity was created for the truth. To consciously close oneself off from the truth is to plunge into deep darkness and blindness. Jesus tells us this very convincingly: “*If any man’s will is to do his will, he shall know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.*” (Jn 7,17)

However, His words did not find open ears among many of the religious leaders; on the contrary, even His life was in danger. The pretext for persecuting Him was that He had healed a man on the Sabbath.

Why were the Jewish religious leaders so determined to put Jesus to death? Even Pilate, the Roman procurator, realized during the interrogation that Jesus was innocent and could not objectively be accused of anything (Mt 27:18). So why such fierce persecution against the Lord at such an early stage of His public ministry? Let us remember that even in Nazareth, where He had grown up, they wanted to throw Him off a cliff (Lk 4:29).

The Holy Scriptures themselves point out the reasons for the persecution. Jesus speaks of the world’s hatred because He testifies that its works are evil (Jn 7:7), and He points out that the Jews (referring to those who were persecuting Him) have the devil as their father (Jn 8:44). In this context, we must also include another statement by Jesus, in which He makes it clear that those who persecute Him do not seek the glory of God but their own glory (Jn 7:18), that they do not judge with righteous judgment (Jn 7:24), etc. We could find further reasons for the blindness of His persecutors, which ultimately led to the cruel death of the Son of God, who had done nothing but proclaim the Kingdom of God and make it evident through the signs He performed.

As can be seen in those who wanted to take Jesus’ life, evil thoughts against Him took

hold of them very quickly, so that they succumbed more and more to the devil's dominion. The weakness the devil was able to exploit was envy, and perhaps also pride upon seeing a man without formal education present Himself as God. Then erroneous thoughts arose that Jesus might deceive the people and, consequently, the position the religious leaders enjoyed among the people would be called into question. Since, instead of listening to Jesus and trusting Him, they offered no resistance to these twisted thoughts but gave them free rein, the devil was able to use them as instruments to carry out his wicked plans through them. This is the situation that takes place "behind the scenes" and which we, as spiritual people, must keep in mind.

On our Lenten journey, let us resolve to ground ourselves deeply in the authentic doctrine of the Church, which is a gift from our Heavenly Father. Thus, the insight we gather from today's meditation is that we must walk the spiritual path in harmony with the sound doctrine of the Church.

Meditation on the reading of the day: <https://en.elijamission.net/the-river-of-life/>

Meditation on the Gospel of the day: <https://en.elijamission.net/jesus-heals-and-warns/>