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“Teach these to your children and to your children’s children” (Deuteronomy 4:19).

[Dt 4:1, 5-9; Mt 5:17-19](#)

Today's readings emphasize the importance of the Law as a formative factor in social reality. For those listening to the examination of Judge Ketanji Jackson Brown as a nominee for the U. S. Supreme Court, this is a good exercise in distinguishing legal competence from political interests. A clear and fair grasp of the role of law at a time of intense ideological controversy becomes critical to the stability and trustworthiness of law in the United States.

With this as background, we can appreciate the early church's interest in preserving Jesus' reputation as upholding and fulfilling the Law in the Israel's theocratic system. The New Testament describes Jesus as rescuing and preserving the essentials of the covenantal Law from later accretions and interpretations that impinged on the most basic commandment to love God and neighbor. Jesus' defense of healing on the Sabbath and distinguishing many external purity laws from inner purity of heart illustrated this.

Moses made this Holiness Code the measure of Israel's fidelity to God as they entered the Promised Land. The people were to remind themselves that God had rescued them when they were slaves. Therefore, they were to treat the oppressed with compassion and justice, to welcome alien workers and care for everyone in need. For Jesus, any move away from this basic care toward a more legalistic society that discriminated against the poor and the oppressed offended against the Commandment of Love that defined the nation.

So, Jesus was regarded as radical not by straying from the Law but for preserving its core, the very rootedness of the people of God to their divine Creator and Founder. He came not to destroy the Law and the Prophets but to fulfill them. His meeting with Moses and Elijah on the mount of the Transfiguration affirms this. Crucified for the sins of the world, Jesus is the Son of Justice and the Lord of Mercy and Love. God commends him as the Beloved Son and tells us to listen to him.

Our journey of Lent brings clarity to our lives by helping us find what is essential to our relationship with God and one another. Every act of love fulfills the whole Law. Every act of justice completes the demands of social order and fairness. We walk with Jesus when we keep the law as he did.

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