

Sunday 3rd (B) of Lent

Gospel text (Jn 2,13-25): As the Passover of the Jews was at hand, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the Temple court He found merchants selling oxen, sheep and doves, and money-changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the Temple court, together with the oxen and sheep. He knocked over the tables of the money-changers, scattering the coins, and ordered the people selling doves, «Take all this away and stop turning my Father's house into a marketplace!». His disciples recalled the words of Scripture: «Zeal for your House devours me as a fire».

The Jews then questioned Jesus, «Where are the miraculous signs which give you the right to do this?». And Jesus said, «Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up». The Jews then replied, «The building of this temple has already taken forty-six years, and you will raise it up in three days?». Actually, Jesus was referring to the temple of his body. Only when He had risen from the dead did his disciples remember these words; then they believed both the Scripture and the words Jesus had spoken.

Jesus stayed in Jerusalem during the Passover Festival and many believed in his Name when they saw the miraculous signs He performed. But Jesus did not trust himself to them, because he knew all of them. He had no need of evidence about anyone for he himself knew what there was in each one.

«Stop turning my Father's house into a marketplace!»

Today, when Easter is approaching, some unusual event has happened at the Temple. Jesus has driven the merchants and their animals out of the Temple court, has knocked over the tables of the money-changers and has ordered the people selling doves «take all this away and stop turning my Father's house into a marketplace!» (Jn 2:16). And while the oxen and the sheep were stampeding across the esplanade, the disciples discovered a new aspect of Jesus' soul: the zeal for his Father's House, the zeal for God's Temple.

The Temple of God becoming a market place! what a disgrace! They probably started with a few animals, a shepherd trying to sell some sheep, or an old woman who wanted to make a few coins by selling doves,... and the ball kept growing and growing. Stop, cried the Song of Songs' author: «Catch us the foxes, the little foxes that damage the vineyards; for our vineyards are in bloom» (Song 2:15). But here, nobody could care less! The Temple esplanade was like a market on market day.

-I am a temple of God, too. If I do not watch, these little foxes, pride, sloth, gluttony, envy, avarice, forms of disguise selfishness often adopts, will sneak in and damage everything. This is why the Lord warns us: «What I say to you, I say to all: 'Watch'!» (Mk 13:37).

Watch!, so that apathy does not invade our conscience: «Being incapable of acknowledging guilt is the most dangerous form of spiritually arrested development one can imagine, because this in particular makes people incapable of improvement» (Benedict XVI).

To stay vigilant? -I try to every night. Did I annoy someone?, are my intentions straightforward?, am I willing to fulfill always and in everything God's will?, have I assumed some practice that may displease our Lord? But, late at night I am too tired and sleepy to think...

-Jesus, you know me well, you know quite well what each man's mind is like, so make me realize my own faults, give me strength and a little bit of that zeal of yours so that I can also drive out from the temple all that might appear to separate me from you.