

Third Sunday of Lent (B)

Gospel text (Jn 2:13-25): Since the Passover of the Jews was near, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. He found in the temple area those who sold oxen, sheep, and doves, as well as the money-changers seated there. He made a whip out of cords and drove them all out of the temple area, with the sheep and oxen, and spilled the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables, and to those who sold doves he said, “Take these out of here, and stop making my Father’s house a marketplace.” His disciples recalled the words of scripture, “Zeal for your house will consume me.”

At this the Jews answered and said to him, “What sign can you show us for doing this?” Jesus answered and said to them, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews said, “This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and you will raise it up in three days?” But he was speaking about the temple of his body. Therefore, when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they came to believe the scripture and the word Jesus had spoken.

While he was in Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, many began to believe in his name when they saw the signs he was doing. But Jesus would not trust himself to them because he knew them all, and did not need anyone to testify about human nature. He himself understood it well.

“Stop making my Father’s house a marketplace!”

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Today, as Easter approaches, an unusual event has occurred in the temple. Jesus has driven out the merchants' cattle, overturned the tables of the money changers, and said to the dove sellers, " Take these out of here, and stop making my Father’s house a marketplace" (Jn 2:16). And while the oxen and sheep scattered through the courtyard, the disciples discovered a new aspect of Jesus's personality: the zeal for His Father's house, the zeal for the temple of God.

The temple of God turned into a marketplace! How outrageous! It must have started with something small. A shepherd coming up to sell a lamb, an elderly woman wanting to earn some money by selling doves..., and it grew from there. So much so that the author of the Song of Songs cried out, "Catch us the foxes, the little foxes that damage the vineyards; for our vineyards are in bloom! " (Song 2:15). But who paid any attention? The temple courtyard resembled a day at the fair.

I too am a temple of God. If I do not watch out for the little foxes —pride, laziness, gluttony, envy, stinginess, so many disguises of selfishness— they sneak in and spoil everything. Therefore, the Lord warns us, "What I say to you, I say to all: ‘Watch!’" (Mk 13:37).

Let us be vigilant, so that sloth does not invade our conscience: "The inability to recognize guilt is the most dangerous form of spiritual dullness imaginable, because it makes people incapable of improvement" (Benedict XVI).

To watch? - I try to do it every night. Have I offended anyone? Are my intentions upright? Am I willing to always and in everything do God's will? Have I formed any kind of habit that displeases the Lord? But at this hour, I am tired and sleep overtakes me.

Jesus, you who know me thoroughly, you who know well what is inside the heart of each person; make me aware of my faults, give me strength and a share of this zeal of yours so that I may cast out of the temple everything that separates me from you.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Christ shed his blood in the sight of the world, a temple fashioned by the hand of God alone. This temple, however, has two parts. The first is the earth, which we now inhabit. The second is as yet unknown to us mortals.” (Saint John Fisher)
- “Jesus, do You trust me? I want You to trust me. Thus I open the door to You, and You cleanse my soul. Ask the Lord that, as He went to cleanse the Temple, He may come to cleanse your soul.” (Francis)
- “Jesus went up to the Temple as the privileged place of encounter with God. For him, the Temple was the dwelling of his Father, a house of prayer, and he was angered that its outer court had become a place of commerce (Mt 21:13.). He drove merchants out of it because of jealous love for his Father: ‘You shall not make my Father's house a house of trade. His disciples remembered that it was written, ‘Zeal for your house will consume me’. After his Resurrection his apostles retained their reverence for the Temple.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, N°584)