

Friday 33rd in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Lk 19,45-48): Jesus entered the Temple area and began to drive out the merchants. And He said to them, «God says in the Scriptures: ‘My house shall be a house of prayer’: but you have turned it into a den of robbers». Jesus was teaching every day in the Temple. The chief priests and teachers of the Law wanted to kill him and the elders of the Jews as well, but they were unable to do anything, for all the people were listening to him and hanging on his words.

«My house shall be a house of prayer»

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Today, Jesus' gesture is prophetic. As the old prophets used to do, He makes a symbolic action, full of future implications. By throwing away from the temple the merchants selling the victims for their offerings and evoking that «my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples» (Is 56:7), Jesus was announcing the new status He was about to commence, where the sacrifice of animals was out of question. St. John will define this new cultural relationship as «God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth» (Jn 4:24). The figure must give way to reality. St. Thomas Aquinas poetically said: «Et antiquum documentum / novo cedat ritui» («Lo! over ancient forms departing / newer rites of grace prevail»).

The New Rites are Jesus' Word. This is why St. Luke has joined to the scene of the purification of the temple Jesus preaching there every day. The new cult is centered in the prayer and in the audition of God's Word. But, in fact, the center's center of the Christian institution is the living person of the very Jesus, with his own flesh offered and his own blood shed at the Cross and given to us in the Eucharist. St. Thomas also beautifully remarks it: «Recumbens cum fratribus (...) se dat suis manibus» («Seated with His chosen band (...) gives Himself with His own hand»).

In the New Testament Jesus inaugurates, there is no need for veal or lamb merchants. In the same way as «all the people were listening to him and hanging on his words» (Lk 19:48), we do not have to go to the temple to make any sacrifices,

but to receive Jesus, the true lamb sacrificed once for all when he offered himself for us (cf. Heb 7:27), and to join our life to His.