Friday of the Thirty-third Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Lk* 19:45-48): Jesus entered the temple area and proceeded to drive out those who were selling things, saying to them, “It is written, My house shall be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves.” And every day he was teaching in the temple area. The chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people, meanwhile, were seeking to put him to death, but they could find no way to accomplish their purpose because all the people were hanging on his words.

“My house shall be a house of prayer”

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Today, Jesus' gesture is prophetic. In the manner of the ancient prophets, he performs a symbolic action, full of significance for the future. By driving out the merchants who were selling the sacrificial victims from the temple and by proclaiming that God’s "house shall be called a house of prayer" (Isaiah 56:7), Jesus announced the new order he was coming to inaugurate, in which animal sacrifices no longer had a place. Saint John would define the new worship relationship as worshipping “the Father in Spirit and truth" (John 4:24). The symbolic must give way to reality. Saint Thomas Aquinas poetically stated: "Et antiquum documentum / novo cedat ritui" ("May the Old Testament give way to the New Rite").

The New Rite is the word of Jesus. That is why Saint Luke has linked the scene of the cleansing of the temple with the depiction of Jesus preaching there every day. The new worship centers on prayer and listening to the Word of God. But, in reality, the very heart of the Christian institution is the living person of Jesus, with his flesh offered up and his blood poured out on the cross and given in the Eucharist. Saint Thomas Aquinas also beautifully emphasizes this: “Recumbens cum fratribus (…) se dat suis manibus” (“Seated at the table with his brothers (…) he gives himself with his own hands”).

In the New Testament inaugurated by Jesus, oxen and lamb merchants are no longer necessary. Just as “all the people were hanging on his words” (Lk 19:48), we are not to go to the temple to sacrifice victims, but to receive Jesus, the true Lamb sacrificed for us once and for all (cf. Acts 7:27), and to unite our lives to his.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Therefore, all run together as into one temple of God, as to one altar, as to one Jesus Christ who came forth from one Father, and is with and has gone to one" (Saint Ignatius of Antioch)

- “The temple with its worship is "demolished" with Christ’s crucifixion; Its place is now taken by the living Ark of the Covenant – the crucified and risen Christ.” (Benedict XVI)

- “Jesus went up to the Temple as the privileged place of encounter with God. For him, the Temple was the dwelling of his Father... After his Resurrection his apostles retained their reverence for the Temple (Cf. Acts 2:46).” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 584)