

## Third Sunday of Lent – March 7, 2021

**First Reading:** EX 20:1-17

**Second Reading:** 1 COR 1:22-25



### **Gospel of John 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.

### **SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS**

From the Book of Exodus, we look at the covenant relationship between God and Israel through the Ten Commandments. In sum, these commandments call us to love God with all our heart, mind and strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves. And to those who love the Lord and follow His commands, He will show "mercy down to the thousandth generation."

In our Gospel today, Jesus purifies the temple area because it is being misused as a marketplace. He becomes angry at the lack of reverence for God – and for his people. He singles out the dove merchants for exploiting the poor, who can barely afford the high cost of the lowliest of offerings. Worse than the merchants were the religious elite who preyed on people, acting as the brokers of divine favor. The hypocrisy angers Jesus, and the leaders, in turn, are offended by Jesus... What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do this? Jesus answered, *Destroy this temple and in three days I will rebuild it.* John 2:19

With hardened hearts they could not understand. The Jewish leaders were supposed to be preparing for the Messiah; but they were so offended by Jesus' challenge they missed seeing what God was doing among them; they missed the very presence of God himself.

#### **PRAYER FOR LENT**

Loving God, Open our eyes to see You and our ears to hear You during this season of conversion.

Help us to renew our *faith*, draw from the living water of *hope*, and awaken our hearts to the *love* of Jesus Christ, Your Son. Amen.

## DISCUSSION

While the religious elite and the marketplace brokers had no idea what Jesus was talking about, we do. Society may not do the best job of teaching us to put love above money, to serve others, or to fight for justice for the oppressed – but our faith does.

1. Of the Ten Commandments, the first three have to do with our relationship with God, and the other seven with the people's relationship with each other. If we live by the *First Commandment*, following the others will be much easier. On the other hand, if we ignore the *First Commandment*, we will all too easily fail when it comes to following the others. How many different "fails" do we hear in the Gospel?
2. Name some ways you see people today violating the First Commandment. What helps you to keep God first in your life? What makes it difficult?
3. How do you feel about people who show zeal for a particular cause? How is their behavior like or different from Jesus?
4. When it comes to worship of God, there is always the danger that our worship becomes ritualistic. We go through the motions of prayer. What can help us to stop that from happening?
5. In this Gospel Jesus was calling for the kind of conversion that Pope Francis says is so necessary in our times. Pope Francis says first we must see every object, every person, every creation as God sees it for its worth. Jesus reminds us of that too in the Temple.

Do you ever hear the "cry of the poor" Pope Francis says over and over in *Laudato Si'*? What do you hear? Is there an awakening opportunity here for us?

• **Continuing with *Laudato Si'*, Chapter 6** – Discuss parallels between this week's Scripture and:

- p203 [extreme consumerism]
- p204 [when people become self-centered, greed increases]
- p205 [yet not all is lost...human beings can rise above]
- p206 [a change in lifestyle can promote social responsibility, and bring change]
- p207 *As never before in history, common destiny beckons us to seek a new beginning... Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life".*
- P208 *We are always capable of going out of ourselves towards the other. ....These attitudes also attune us to the moral imperative of assessing the impact of our every action and personal decision on the world around us. If we can overcome individualism, we will truly be able to develop a different lifestyle and bring about significant changes in society.*

**LENT REVIEW: What are you working on this Lent? Awakening .... blind to seeing; deaf to hearing; asleep to awake, etc.? How is that going?**