

Third Sunday of Lent (John 2, 13-25)

Jesus is a son of a carpenter and is a carpenter Himself. This viewpoint of a carpenter moved Him to see that the Temple needs a major overhaul. He must have observed that its foundation is fast breaking apart by the misguided loyalty of the people. He feels that the temple, a house of prayer and reverence to God, lost the sanctity it deserves. Thus, the necessity to clean it up was so urgent for Him. He strongly said, "Destroy this Temple and in three days, I will raise it up."

What has gotten Jesus so enraged? The merchants and money changers were there in the temple precincts to perform a legitimate service, especially at Passover time. Many pilgrims traveled great distances for the feast and, instead of bringing an animal with them from home they could purchase one at the Temple. Money changers were important because the pilgrims needed to exchange their foreign coins for the half shekel, the only acceptable coinage for Temple worship.

Greek and Roman coins had images on them and had some inscriptions declaring Caesar divine. These would be considered blasphemous and were forbidden in the Temple. So, the merchants and money changers performed an important service.

What then was the problem? These merchants had a good business and Jesus' anger may suggest they cheated their customers, the devout who came to worship. Jesus reveals the righteous anger God feels when what is good and intended to help people gets infiltrated by human greed.

What is the message of the gospel to us this Sunday? Jesus Himself is the temple of the Holy Spirit and all baptized Christians are also “temples” through Him of the Holy Spirit. Jesus counts on our responsibility to virtually live as temples of the Holy Spirit. He expects everyone to settle no less. But our society today slowly creeps into the darkness of sin and the temples that we once are now start to touch down its tragic collapse. It is because it is a lot easier for us to profess our faith than concretely witness it in the way we live.

Let us look what is happening in our society and some families today. Many couples solve their problems by separation. Some children do not respect their parents anymore. The respectable tradition of reverence and respect for elders now comes to a crisis. Office workers compete and envy one another. Superiors take advantage of their positions. At home some people find it hard to forgive a brother, a sister, a mother or a father than to forgive others.

The home is also a temple. It is a temple of love and peace. It is a temple of understanding and acceptance. *When children prefer to stay with their friends outside than to stay with their family at home, maybe because their homes do not anymore share love with each other. When husbands or wives look for other short-time partners somewhere, maybe because patience and forgiveness do not anymore sustain their promises to live for better or for worse.* In other words, there is a need for us to repair. There is a great need for us to build anew. And it should, first of all, start in the human heart because the first temple of God is the heart of the people.

Today, it remains a challenge for us to make our homes, our churches, places where God unites and repairs His people, touches their hearts, and dwells in them to create a new world. We might have built beautiful stone churches and sky-rising cathedrals, but its real beauty and valuable treasure can only be found in people's heart. We may feel more inspired to pray in our church when it has the right atmosphere. But the priority of our mission should seek to build a community of disciples who only have words of Jesus to live by. It is by living out His words, it is by becoming instruments of His sacrificing love that we are able to build the temple of His Spirit. Actions that are brewed in the economy of faith take supremacy in becoming a follower of Jesus. And in the context of faith, praxis takes precedence over theory.

Amen.

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