

"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up"**Reading 1: Ex 20 : 1 -17****Reading 2: 1 Cor 1: 22 – 25****Responsorial Psalm: Ps 18: 8 – 11****Gospel : John 2: 13 - 25****Gospel Reading: John 2:13-25**

The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers at their business. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all, with the sheep and oxen, out of the temple; and he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; 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." 18 The Jews then said to him, "What sign have you to show us for doing this?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he spoke of the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken. Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs which he did; but Jesus did not trust himself to them, because he knew all men and needed no one to bear witness of man; for he himself knew what was in man.

Meditation: What can keep us from the presence of God? Jesus' dramatic cleansing of the temple was seen by his disciples as a prophetic sign of God's work to purify and restore true worship and holiness among his people. The temple was understood as the dwelling place of God among his people. When God delivered his people from slavery in Egypt, he brought them safely through the Red Sea, and led them to Mount Sinai where he made a covenant with them and gave them a new way of living in moral goodness and holiness embodied in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17). God also gave Moses instruction for how his people were to worship him in holiness and he instructed them to make a Tabernacle, which was also referred to as the "tent of meeting" where the people gathered to offer sacrifice and worship to God. The tent of meeting was later replaced by the construction of the temple at Jerusalem. The New Testament Scripture tells us that these "serve as a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary" - God's true Temple in heaven (Hebrews 8:5). Jesus' cleansing of the temple is also a prophetic sign of what he wants to do with each of us. He ever seeks to cleanse us of our sinful ways in order to make us into living temples of his Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). God desires that we be holy as he is holy. Do you thirst and hunger for God's holiness?

Jesus burns with zeal for his Father's house.

When Jesus went to Jerusalem at Passover time he shocked the Jewish leaders by forcibly expelling the money-changers and traders from the temple. Jesus referred to the temple as his Father's house which was being made into a "house of trade" (John 2:16) and "den of robbers" (Mark 11:17). The prophecy of Malachi foretold the coming of the Lord unexpectedly to his Temple to "purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, till they present right offerings to the Lord" (Malachi 3:1-4). Jesus' disciples recalled the prophetic words of Psalm 69: "Zeal for your house will consume me." This psalm was understood as a Messianic prophecy. Here the disciples saw Jesus more clearly as the Messiah who burned with zeal for God's house. The Jewish authorities wanted proof that Jesus had divine authority to act as he did. They demanded a sign from God to prove Jesus right, otherwise, they would treat him as an imposter and a usurper of their authority. Jesus spoke of himself as the true Temple which cleanses and makes us a holy people who can dwell with God. The sign Jesus gave pointed to his sacrificial death on the cross and his rising from the tomb on the third day: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). The Jews did not understand that the temple Jesus referred to was his own body. The "tent of his body" had to first be destroyed (that is, be put to death as the atoning sacrifice for our sins) in order to open the way for us to freely enter into the holy presence of God in his heavenly sanctuary (Hebrews 10:19).

The Lord Jesus makes us temples of the Holy Spirit

Through his death and resurrection, the Lord Jesus has reconciled us with God and made us adopted sons and daughters of our heavenly Father, and he fills us with his Holy Spirit and makes us living temples of our God (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 2 Corinthians 6:16). Do you recognize the indwelling presence of God within you through the gift and working of his Holy Spirit? The Lord Jesus wants to renew our minds and to purify our hearts so that we may offer God fitting worship and enjoy his presence both now and forever. Ask the Lord Jesus to fill you with a holy desire and burning zeal for his holiness and glory to grow in you and transform the way you think, act, and live as a son or daughter of God.

Questions for Community Faith Sharing:

1. Who are the "merchants" that pollute our church today?
2. Why was Jesus angry? Is anger good or bad? Please share why?
3. Lent is a good time for spring cleaning. What kind of debris is there between your relationship with God and your concern towards others?

"Lord Jesus Christ, you open wide the door of your Father's house and you bid us to enter confidently that we may worship in spirit and truth. Help me to draw near to your throne of mercy with gratitude and joy."