

**“Love your enemies,” Jesus said. “Let the children come to me,” Jesus said. “Turn the other cheek,” Jesus said. Is this the same guy who stormed into the Temple; made a whip; drove out the buyers, sellers and animals; spilled coins and overturned tables? People must have wondered what on earth he was doing. Besides, they needed these services. If they were going to offer sacrifice in the Temple, they had to buy animals. If they were going to pay the Temple tax, they had to trade their Roman coins for ones that did not bear portraits of their rulers. They were all just doing their job.**

**It is widely assumed that the vendors were doing something else – trading unfairly, taking advantage of the poor, or promoting insincere practices of worship. But John’s gospel never says that when it describes this scene. Instead, Jesus gives a different reason for his actions. He predicts the complete destruction of the Temple, an event that actually happened when Roman troops entered Jerusalem in the year 70 AD. Jesus compares the Temple to his own body. Just as the Temple will be destroyed, so his body will be destroyed. The difference is that he will rise again in three days.**

**For Christians this story shows how the risen Jesus replaced the physical Temple. The Jews regarded the Temple as the most solemn place for worship, but Christians do not need one central place because the risen Christ is available to us in our prayer, in our service, in our community, and in our eucharist wherever we happen to be.**

**This story comes to us during Lent because it foreshadows the death and resurrection of Jesus, but also as a reminder that for us this season is a time to overturn one way of life and replace it with another. We are the body of Christ. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. But we are human and we fail. This reading may prompt each of us to ask this question: If Jesus appeared to me today with a whip in his hands; if he fixed his eyes on me and saw through me, what would he be driving out of my mind, out of my hands, out of my feelings, out of my habits? Would I be as surprised as the vendors in the Temple, who thought they were only doing their job, that Jesus storms into my life?**

**Here are a few questions to help each of us examine our consciences: Have I listened to the word of God? Am I faithful to prayer? Do I learn the teachings of the Church and strive to keep them? Have I hesitated to defend my beliefs in the presence of others? Do I fear to let others know I am a Christian? Do I practice chastity out of respect for my body and the bodies of others? Have I given in to sensuality? Have I indulged in reading, conversation, websites, and entertainments contrary to Christian and human decency? Have I led others to sin by my failure to maintain these standards? Have I been faithful to my married life? Have I been faithful to my state of life as a single person?**

**This Lent is a time to cleanse the temple of our bodies, minds and spirits. If we seek forgiveness from God, we will celebrate Easter as the purified Temple of the Holy Spirit.**