

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

March 5, 1994

Exodus 20:1-17

Then God spoke all these words: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments. You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name. Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it. Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

1 Corinthians 1:22-25

For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

John 2:13-25

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken. When he was in Jerusalem during the Passover festival, many believed in his name because they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus on his part would not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to testify about anyone; for he himself knew what was in everyone.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Has zeal for anything ever consumed you? Was it worthwhile? What did you do about it?
2. If you compare your spiritual life to the rooms of your house, which rooms do you think Jesus might want to clean up? Library: reading room - Dining room: appetites, desires - Workshop: where you keep your gifts, skills and talents - Recreation room: where you hang out after work - Family room: where most of your relationships are lived out - Closet: where your hang-ups are.
3. The temple of Christ's body is the Church. Do you feel the need to have the temple of your family, your parish, or your Church, cleansed? If you are not the one to do it, how else might it get done?

Father Terry Bruce, Sister Margie Hosh, Kathy Prather, Karen Neuser. ☐

Wonder seekers miss the point

THE GOOD NEWS

GOD'S WORD IN EVERYDAY LIVING

By Father Paul Turner



WE'RE GIVING YOU Scriptures today that you may not hear next Sunday at all. Possibly you'll study these texts all week, show up for Mass next Sunday, and hear the deacon or priest reading about the woman at the well (John 4:5-42). No need to adjust the antenna or phone the chancery. The lectionary gives us a choice.

The readings from Cycle A include the woman at the well. Cycle B, which we offer this week, reports the cleansing of the temple. However, during any Lent that you have catechumens preparing for an Easter baptism in your parish, you can and should hear the readings from Cycle A on week three, four, and five of this penitential season. The reason is that meditating on those stories (The Woman at the Well, The Man Born Blind, and The Raising of Lazarus) helps the catechumens understand their coming to faith. These stories also help the parish community express its prayer and support for the catechumens in the Scrutinies (special prayers for the unbaptized) which fall on these Sundays.

So, if your parish has catechumens, it should have Scrutinies this Sunday. If you have Scrutinies, you should hear The Woman at the Well. If you have no catechumens, or if the Scrutinies are celebrated at a Mass different from the one you're attending, you may well hear The Cleansing of the Temple.

Obviously if your biggest concern on Sunday is how to keep the kids from pulling each other's hair and scribbling on the back of the next pew, all this won't matter very much to you. That's fine - Lent is about charity as much as it's about prayer.

CALLING WHAT JESUS DID at the temple a "cleansing" may be a bit of a misnomer here. No can of Ajax appears to the divine scourer. By the time Jesus is through upsetting tables, spilling coins and shooing away doves, the temple is probably a

lot dirtier than when he arrived.

Besides, the reason we hear this text today is not to proclaim that cleanliness is next to Godliness. Rather, the point is to hear Jesus' prediction: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." This confuses Jerusalem, but we know with our Easter eyes that he's speaking about the resurrection of the "temple" of his own body. The liturgy gives us this prediction today to help us prepare for the great miracle which concludes the season.

Incidentally, John puts this episode near the beginning of his Gospel (2:13-25), right after the first miracle at the wedding at Cana. The other Gospels claim Jesus raged against the temple marketplace at the beginning of Holy Week. In fact, they see it as one of the main reasons for his arrest -- his "desecration" of the temple.

In John, the raising of Lazarus in Chapter 11 is the event that finally leads to Jesus' arrest. By placing the temple episode here John introduces us to the resurrection and the comparison of the temple to the "body of Christ." When Jesus says he would "raise up" the temple in three days, John has him use a verb which could refer to the erection of a building or the resurrection of a body.

As a result of this prophecy, many come to believe in the resurrection. John says many also believe because of the signs Jesus worked. But in an interesting development, Jesus does not "entrust himself to them" because he knew their thoughts. Seekers of signs and wonders miss the point of Jesus' ministry. Jesus does not trust them, even if they say they believe.

JESUS STORMED the temple marketplace at the risk of his own life, and used the occasion to teach about the resurrection. Which institutions today abuse their privilege? Have you ever taken a strong stand against them? Even at the risk of embarrassing yourself? Or losing your life?

Where does our Church take a strong stand against society's institutions? How does society misunderstand our intentions?

If Jesus walked into your parish church, your office, or your home, which tables would he overturn? Whom would he anger?

As you continue your journey through Lent, Christ may be overturning the tables of your life. But he destroys only to promise. After three days, the temple will rise.

Father Paul Turner is pastor of St. John Francis Regis Parish, Kansas City. ☐

Daily Scripture Readings

Second Sunday of Lent

Sunday, February 27

Genesis 22:1-2, 9, 10-13, 15-18

Psalms 116:10, 15-19

Romans 8:31-34

Mark 9:2-10

Monday, February 28

Daniel 9:4-10

Psalms 79:8-9, 11, 13

Luke 6:36-38

Tuesday, March 1

Isaiah 1:10, 16-20

Psalms 50:8-9, 16-17, 21, 23

Matthew 23:1-12

Wednesday, March 2

Jeremiah 18:18-20

Psalms 31:5-6, 14-16

Matthew 20:17-28

Thursday, March 3

Jeremiah 17:5-10

Psalms 1:1-4, 6

Luke 16:19-31

Friday, March 4

Genesis 37:3-4, 12-13

17-28

Psalms 105:16-21

Matthew 21:33-43, 45-46

Saturday, March 5

Micah 7:14-15, 18-20

Psalms 103:1-4, 9-12

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

Third Sunday of Lent

Sunday, March 6

Exodus 20:1-17

Psalms 19:8-11

1 Corinthians 1:22-25

John 2:13-25

