

## Homily for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent

This week's first reading took me back to primary school remembering having to learn the 10 commandments by heart and hope that I wouldn't be the one who had to recite them in front of the class! No wonder they could have a negative effect, especially when we count the number of prohibitions. However there is another way of looking at them, namely, as a way to live in freedom. The God who freed the people from slavery in Egypt now shows them how to remain free, free to worship the one true God recognising their need for Sabbath rest, free to respect God by keeping God's name holy, and to respect each other, in all aspects of life. In time the 10 commandments were placed in the Ark of the Covenant and once the Temple had been built, the Ark of the Covenant was placed in the Holy of Holies, and this revered word of God was given the highest honour in the belief that God was present.

It is to the Temple that Jesus goes today and he is angry acting in an extraordinary way by making a whip out of some cord, driving out those who were selling sheep and cattle, scattering the money changers' coins and saying, 'Take all this out of here and stop turning my Father's house into a market.' Many of us have been brought up to curb our anger and so can feel guilty if we get angry. However, some crucial changes for the better have only happened because people got angry. The civil rights movement, the emancipation of women, awareness of the impact of climate change wouldn't have happened without individuals putting their necks on the line to bring about change. The change Jesus is referring to by cleansing the Temple is his claim that he will replace the Temple as the place where people will meet God. Not surprisingly the people want some sign to justify what he has just done.

Jesus answers in a way that was open to different interpretations – "Destroy this sanctuary and in 3 days I will raise it up." Jesus means the sanctuary of his own body, the Jews think he means the sanctuary which had taken 46 years to build, namely the Temple. It was only after his death and resurrection that Jesus' words made any sort of sense and were the source of faith for his disciples. People will now meet God in the person of the Risen Jesus.

So, the cleansing of the Temple brings about another turning point in our relationship with God. Jesus now is THE way to God, it is his word of truth and justice that guides us, reminding us that he has the message of eternal life. There is an aggression, a zeal in Jesus which confronts what he sees as an affront not only to his Father's House, but to the Father himself. Perhaps we could pray for a similar zeal to confront the powers that degrade people, that keep prosperity in the hands of the few, that silence those who dare to oppose them. A zeal which is not content with ideas and words but which transforms them into actions for the common good. A zeal which will help us to resist the temptation to do nothing but rather to see Jesus as the one who helps us to live life to the full, even, perhaps especially, when this means disturbing the peace.

## Bidding Prayers for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent

Celebrant:

The decrees of the Lord are truth and all of them just. With these words of the psalm in our minds and hearts we turn to God in prayer.

Reader:

For the Church – that the Church will remind us that the whole of creation is sacred and worthy of our respect.

Lord in your mercy

For our political and civic leaders – that they will do all they can to make sure those they serve can live in freedom, experience justice and enjoy peace.

Lord in your mercy

For our Church buildings – that they may be experienced by all as places of welcome, hospitality and healing.

Lord in your mercy

For those who are sick in body, mind or spirit, especially those suffering from dementia and those who care for them – that they will receive the love and support they need.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, all victims of violence, accident, natural disasters and the COVID pandemic and Herbert Heywood, Bret Taylor, May Hudson, Alan Stansfield, Francis Hyland and Des McKeown whose anniversaries occur this week – that they and all who have died may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord in your mercy

Either aloud or in silence we pray for our own special intentions...pause...then

Lord in your mercy

We ask the prayers of Mary as we say, Hail Mary...

Celebrant:

Loving God, in the fullness of time, your Son revealed himself to be the Temple of God among us. Help us to be living stones drawing life from him, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen