

3rd Sunday of Lent
March 15, 2009

Our first reading today, the responsorial psalm and the gospel all have one thing in common: they talk about the law. Laws are important for us, not because we do not know right from wrong, but because they help us feel justified when we think we are right. Jesus encountered that type of thinking in the gospels among the Scribes, the Sadducees and the Pharisees, and we still see it oftentimes today. People justify themselves with the letter of the law, but ignore the spirit of the law.

Today's gospel is one of the few times we will hear of Jesus being angry. Zeal for His Father's house consumed Jesus. He became so angry that he drove out the sheep and the oxen and all the people, merchants and those looking to buy offerings for the temple. He turned over the money changers' tables spilling the coins. It was very unlike Jesus to cause people to lose their method of earning a living, but it was the zeal for the temple.

If you stop and think about it, the story could be about us. We know the law. We've heard the Ten Commandments as given to us in the first reading. We know what we are NOT supposed to do. But we also know what we should do. We are aware of the extra effort that is expected of us as Christians. And yet, we still often fail to even just follow the law. Our bodies are God's Temple. When we sin, we defile and corrupt our. And the zeal which Jesus has for our bodies, for these temples, causes him to want to see us made pure, to see us healed from our sins. But he is not going to make a whip from cords and drive the sin out of us. We have to do that ourselves.

During this time of Lent, we are called to repentance in preparation for the Easter celebration. God will forgive us our sins, but we have to take the first step. We must first acknowledge our sins. That sounds so simple, but in today's "ME" world, people have a difficult time admitting that what they are doing is wrong, even when they know it is. Then accept responsibility. You cannot say, Yes, I hit my brother, but he made me do it or yes I cheated on my wife, but she drove me to it. You must accept the responsibility for what you have done. You must be sorry for the sins you have committed. It is amazing how many people want forgiveness for things they do not regret. And lastly, you must at least intend not to repeat the sin. We are human. We will stumble, and some behaviors become addictions. But if there is no intent of halting a behavior, why seek forgiveness?

We will be having a parish Reconciliation Service on Tuesday, March 31 at 7 pm here in the church. For some, it may have been a while since you have sat down and received sacramental Confession. Yes, it is God who forgives our sins, but when we sin, we damage our relationship with the Church as well. This is an opportunity to rectify that relationship with the Church.

We can each make our own whip of prayer and drive out the bad from our own temples.