

3rd Sunday of Lent, 3 March 2024

Scriptures: Exodus 20:1-17; 1Corinthians 1:22-25; John 2:13-25

Homily: Fr. Ken

Today's Gospel comes from St. John the evangelist. He wrote his gospel much later than the other three evangelists, perhaps at the sunset of his life. He had, in a way of speaking, seen it all.

It was about thirty years before John wrote his Gospel that the huge Temple of Jerusalem had been destroyed by the Roman army.

At one time, the Temple had been among the wonders of the ancient world, the most sacred place on earth for the Jews, the very place where God dwelt among God's people. Now it was little more than a pile of ruins.

Yet for John, it was so much more than just an ancient site. He had seen it in its glory days. Now he was quite old, but as a young man he had actually visited it with Jesus. Back then it was Passover time, and John witnessed the huge influx of Jews coming from all parts of the Mediterranean world.

What he had seen were the Temple court areas being turned into a kind of bazaar, with the transactions of money exchangers, the noisy haggling of buyers and sellers, with sheep and pigeons all around.

John could also see that Jesus was being stressed out, in fact, he was angry. The next moment, with whip in hand, Jesus cleared them all out of the Temple area—men and animals alike. He was tipping over the tables of the money changers, with coins flying all around. And, he explained why: "Stop turning my Father's house into a marketplace", he shouted.

Seeing Jesus' reaction reminded him of the prophetic words, "Zeal for your house will devour me".

Needless to say, the Jewish religious leaders were not amused. They must have thought: Who did this young rabbi from Nazareth think he was? What sign could he offer to show what it all meant?

Jesus' reply must have left them bewildered: "Destroy this sanctuary"—a sanctuary already forty-six years in the building—"and in three days I will raise it up". But they were not the only bewildered ones. John admits that it was only after Jesus' death and resurrection that he realized what Jesus was getting at. It was then that the pieces fell into place. It was as if, on that day in the Temple, Jesus had put his hand on his own heart when he said: "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up". He, the living temple of God, destroyed on Good Friday, will rise again on Easter morning.

For us here, we are starting the third week of Lent. Within a few more weeks, we shall be celebrating the death and resurrection of Jesus. In the risen Jesus, we have the new indestructible temple of God. This temple is not made of stones, however magnificent, but of the glorified resurrected Jesus. This is where God is to be found, and where God is worshipped in spirit and in truth.

Perhaps the most extraordinary feature of this new temple is that it is built of living stones—and the living stones are all of us. Together with Christ we make one temple to the glory of our Creator God.

These thoughts may help us to see our Lent in a new light—as a way of making us more worthy of our dignity as true and faithful followers of Jesus Christ.

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