



Lent / Carême / Cuaresma 2021

Third Sunday of Lent

7th March

Gospel Reading:

Jesus in the Temple

John 2: 13-25

MOVEMENT 1: THE CONTEXT

To begin our prayer, we are in silence, and we read the first part of this Gospel passage (verses 13 – 16). We ask Jesus that we may look at our reality with his eyes and feel with his heart just as he looked at and felt his own reality.

Then we ask ourselves: *Which “temples” nowadays are being desecrated because of economic, political and social interests?*

Look at these “living temples”: faces of children who have been brutalised, abandoned, and abused; of adolescents and young people caught up in drug- trafficking networks; of the disappeared; of the victims of trafficking; of women whose dignity has been violated in so many ways; of exploited workers; of abandoned elderly men and women; of those who are suffering from abuse of power... And so many more! Look for them, look at them, listen to them.

Let these realities touch your heart and your mind. Welcome them in a moment of silence. Listen to their cries. Recognise what these “desecrated temples” stir in you, what they make you think of and feel. Try to look at them as Jesus looks at them.

MOVEMENT 2: REFLECTION / DISCERNMENT

From St John’s Gospel 2: 13–25: **Jesus was filled with indignation.** The narrator describes his reaction in a very graphic way: Making a whip out of cord, he drove all the animals out of the holy place, scattered the moneychangers' coins, knocked their tables over, and cried out, **‘Take all this out of here and stop using my Father's house as a marketplace.’**

Jesus feels like a stranger in this place. What he sees with his own eyes has nothing to do with the true worship of his Father. This temple is not the house of a Father God where all are welcomed as brothers and sisters. Jesus is unable to see that “family of God” that he wants to build up with his followers. It is nothing but a market place where everyone is looking for business. .

Let us not think that Jesus is condemning a primitive, barely-evolved religion. His criticism is more fundamental. God cannot be the protector and concealer of a religion based on self-interest and selfishness. **God is a Father who can be worshipped only by working for a more compassionate and loving human community.**

Almost without realising it, we can all nowadays become “sellers and money-changers” who only live for their own self-interest. We are turning the world into a big market where everything is bought and sold, and we run the risk of experiencing even our relationship with the Mystery of God in a commercial way.

How am I relating to Jesus today?

Do my requests sound like demands? Do I ask Him to resolve matters for me?

For those who see Jesus as the new temple where God dwells, everything is different. To meet God, it is not sufficient to enter a church. It is necessary to draw near to Jesus, to enter into his vision, to follow in his footsteps, to live by his spirit. The doors of this new temple that is Jesus are open to all. Nobody is excluded. Sinners, the unclean, and even pagans can enter. The God who dwells in Jesus belongs to all and is for all.

We must make our Christian communities into a place where we can all feel that we are truly in the “Father’s house”. A welcoming and loving house where no doors are closed to anybody, where nobody is excluded or discriminated against. A house where we learn to pay attention to the sufferings of God’s most vulnerable children and not only to our own interests. A house where we can call on God as Father or Mother, because we feel we are his children and strive to live as sisters and brothers.

From the document *Fratelli Tutti*: It is my desire that, in this our time, by acknowledging the dignity of each human person, we can contribute to the rebirth of a universal aspiration to solidarity. Solidarity between all men and women. “Here we have a splendid secret that shows us how to dream and to turn our life into a wonderful adventure. No one can face life in isolation... We need a community that supports and helps us, in which we can help one another to keep looking ahead. How important it is to dream together... By ourselves, we risk seeing mirages, things that are not there. Dreams, on the other hand, are built together” #8

In what way am I ready to “make” Community?

*Is the home of my heart open, welcoming and warm,
where others can find rest and hope?*

To what do I feel called?

MOVEMENT 3: COMMITMENT / ACTION

- If possible, depending on your situation, visit a shrine or chapel, either alone or with your family/ community. Become aware of the sacred space and the presence of God there. Spend a moment in prayer as you ask for your heart to be His temple and an open house for others.

- Look for other ways of creating community support, freely and sincerely, by giving your time to others, helping or giving a word of encouragement, paying a visit to someone who needs it or sharing your home.



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