

3rd SUNDAY OF LENT

St. John 2:13-25

The cleansing of the Temple, as this Gospel is commonly known, should be a Gospel that is more widely read, more widely taught, and more widely known. Why? Because it puts an end to the religion of nice and the “nice guy” Jesus who, if anything at all, is just a role model amongst others in other religions that we can use an example.

We are taught today about Jesus being a “nice guy” who went around being nice to everyone and telling everyone to feel good about themselves. Well I have read the Bible from cover to cover and I do not remember ever reading that. What I do remember reading are passages like this Gospel with Our Lord driving the money changers and pigeon-sellers out of the Temple and overturning their tables. And passages like those where He called the scribes and Pharisees “hypocrites”, “child[ren] of hell”, “blind fools”, “snakes” and a “brood of vipers” (see *Mt. 23*). (In fact, if you want to a good read of the best insults, have a look at the Gospel of St. Matthew, chapter 23.) Then there is the time He called King Herod a “fox” (*Lk. 13:32*) and called those who profane the sacred “dogs” and “pigs” (*Mt. 7:6*). The point of this is not that it is alright for us, then, to insult others. It is not right for us to do that. What it does mean, however, is that the Truth demands this same kind of fire in the belly, this same kind of enthusiasm and energy that Our Lord had when He confronted those who would tear down the Faith and tear down those who were trying to lead holy lives.

Our Faith is not supposed to be the “religion of nice”. We are not supposed to be a faith for wimps. Truth must be our priority, and truth is not always soft and soothing. One of the most popular images of Our Lord is that of the “Good Shepherd”. But do you know why a shepherd carries a staff with him? He

carries it not only to guide the sheep in the right direction but to beat away the wolves that come after the sheep.

The tragedy is that many of those who profess themselves to be Catholic take everything seriously expect the Catholic faith. Instead of embracing the unchanging truth of the Church, they, instead, embrace the teachings of this politically correct world. This world, which at best does not believe in God and at worst hates God still claims that everyone is going to heaven. It teaches, “do whatever you want” and “try to be a nice person”. But where does it say that in the Bible and what great Saints of the Church ever taught that? The world says “everyone is going to heaven, you don’t need to try and be holy”. Well that has never been said in the last 2,000 years. Ever. So why do so many believe this today?

We are taught that we should be tolerant of the world and of different ideas, even those that go directly against our Faith. We are told we should not make waves but just accept everyone as they are. We are forced to be quiet and to not speak up but to keep our Faith at home where nobody can see it. And let’s face it, many people do that. How many listen to Our Lord and follow His command to keep holy the sabbath day (see *Ex. 20:8*) and so attend Mass every Sunday? Instead, as some people have freely and unashamedly told me, they only bother to go to Mass on “special occasions”. So on Ash Wednesday the churches are full and on Good Friday they are full again, but in between, where are they? Maybe they think God only takes roll call on certain days of the year.

The fact is that our Faith is difficult. It demands heroes, it demands that each of us face up to our own sinfulness and make amends, it demands perseverance in the face of seemingly insurmountable struggles, it demands that we abandon ourselves to the only person who will ever save us—Jesus Christ. We are supposed to be saving souls not celebrating sin.

So why did Our Lord drive out the money changers and the pigeon sellers and overturn the tables in the Temple? Because, as St. John writes, He was filled

with zeal (see *Jn. 2:17*). His love for God His Father filled Him and His love for those who sought to follow the law of God overwhelmed Him. The money-changers and the pigeon-sellers made a trade of debasing the Jewish faith and making money from the poor who longed to fulfill their duty to God. You see, the gifts of money to the Temple could only be paid using Hebrew coins and those from foreign countries had to exchange their money for the local currency and would be charged a fee for this by the money-changers. It is the same for the pigeon-sellers. The usual sacrifice offered at the Temple was a lamb but the Law allowed for the poor to offer two pigeons or doves instead. Those who sold these pigeons and doves to the poor would often overcharge them and so profit from them.

Today we still have money-changers and pigeon-sellers in the Church. They may not literally be changing money or selling pigeons but they are robbing the poor. And I don't mean the materially poor but the spiritually poor. There are many good men and women, young and old, who work hard for a life of holiness. They want to be saints. They want to give due worship to almighty God because, above all else, they love Him. So they follow the precepts of the Church—they attend Mass every Sunday, they make their confession, they observe the holy days and days of solemnity, they provide for the needs of the Church, and they pray. They do this because it is good, because it is of God. But there are those who try to deny them this, both outside and inside of the Church. They say that all religions are the same and if you claim that Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life (see *Jn. 14:6*) then you are close minded. They say that if you believe in traditional marriage and family then you are bigoted. They say that if you speak up and preach what the Church teaches then you are intolerant. Well for those here who suffer these attacks, I am telling you that professing your faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ is not close minded but an act of holy Faith. That believing in marriage and the family is not bigoted but a faithful understanding of the world created by almighty God. That standing up

and preaching the truths of our Faith is not intolerant but an act of great love. Our Lord spoke up and spoke out because of His love for us. When you do this, you are fulfilling His command to love one another and, above all, to love God.

Stand up and stand strong in the Faith—the one, true Faith. Do not be afraid, for as St. Paul said, “God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength” (1 *Cor.* 1:25).

St. Joseph, patron and defender of the universal Church, pray for us.