

Third Sunday of Lent (B) - Casting Out Clutter

The Gospel today presents a very dramatic scene.

We see and hear the firm authority of Jesus being asserted as he thrusts out all that does not belong in the Temple.

He wants to renew the sense of God's presence that should be there.

What he Jesus does is quite **striking** – in every sense of that word.

But perhaps it seems remote from our own experience?

Suppose we considered ourselves as the Temple?

We are indeed 'Temples of God', as St Paul reminds us in his letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 3:16; 6:9).

Suppose we think of Jesus dismissing from our **hearts and lives** all that clutters, all that is out of place, all that is inappropriate, all that obscures our sense of God?

We all know how the collection of **material things** can clutter our own **homes**.

We begin by acquiring what we consider to be essential...

then those things which are thought to be useful...

and before we know it we find that we have amassed a whole heap of stuff which is really quite unnecessary for our happiness – and can in fact get in the way!

Perhaps we should take stock not only of the **things** that we have about us but of our **activities**.

We each have responsibilities – at work, to our family, to our own selves.

We also have our duty to God, and to our fellow human beings who are in great need.

To achieve a balance in our response to these different **demands** is not easy.

Disproportion and disorder can easily creep in.

We need Divine Wisdom to assess what is truly important and to *cast out* the rest.

Or we might look into our **hearts**.

If we find them occupied with the grudges we are bearing...

If we discover ourselves to be nurturing grievances, tending hurt pride, refusing to accept that we were wrong over some matter or other, or wallowing in self-pity...

then our hearts need to be cleansed because such things fester and corrupt us from within:

they are wholly negative, they destroy our character, indeed, they affect our **whole well-being**.

We could usefully give some attention to the content of what we **say, or write down.**

Perhaps we might see, on reflection, words that are quite out of place – obscenities, profanities, words which we know we have said, or have written, purposely to hurt or offend or belittle someone: spiteful words, hate-full words – or perhaps just thoughtless, insensitive words that have still caused others pain.

If we were to assess ourselves, as today's Scriptures invite us to, against the standard of the **Ten Commandments**, how would we make out?

Is there dishonesty in my life? Or greed? Envy? Anger? Laziness?

Are there relationships I am persisting in which I know are inappropriate?

Am I allowing myself to become **dominated** by my feelings?

God is present in the **Temple of our personal experience**

God is present in our inner selves, and in our daily circumstances.

God is calling to us there, and God is expecting a response from us.

And God is offering us gifts of grace to help us.

But we can allow so much to get into our lives and hearts that we are completely **taken up** and cannot attend on God, or be open to receive these divine gifts.

We need **Jesus** to help us **see**, and to *dismiss* all that is an obstacle; all that is causing confusion and disarray; all that is clamouring for our attention but will do us no good whatever.

Jesus **knows** what is in us, and what is in our lives.

Let us ask for the grace of **His** perception, and for the gift of his **courage** and **power** to *drive out* all that does not belong.