

3rd Sunday of Lent

Jesus, in today's gospel, expressed his unhappiness with the Temple policy and services. He expressed it when he went up to Jerusalem for the Passover.

Passover is the feast which commemorates the liberation of the Jews from the slavery of Egypt.

During the time of Jesus Passover saw Jerusalem filled to the overflowing with Jews from around the world.

On coming to the Temple, they had to pay a Temple Tax for the upkeep and support of the building and services.

Tax was to be paid in Jewish currency; shekels. The moneychangers were in the Temple area, therefore, to facilitate the necessary exchange of currency.

The Jews came to the Temple to offer sacrifice. They, therefore, sold unblemished sacrificial animals in the Temple area.

These activities in the Temple area disturbed the loving, prayerful and peaceful atmosphere that should prevail within the Temple.

So, Jesus on entering the Temple area drove the moneychangers and those selling the sacrificial animals out. He told them to stop making his Father's house a marketplace.

The first way Jesus himself described the Temple was to call it "My Father's house".

Jesus for the first time in the Gospel of John speaks of his relationship with the Father. The Father is the source of Jesus' authority and his mission of salvation.

Jesus used the word "house" to carry the emotional sense of a home, not simply a building. That is Jesus approached the Temple as such a place of love and belonging that making it a marketplace struck him as offensive.

The first reading from the Book of Exodus focuses on the Ten Commandments.

Through the commandments God provided instruction that was foundational to his covenant relationship with Israel.

The first three commandments express the absolute fidelity that Israel owed to God; not having any other god besides him, not taking the name of the Lord their God in vain and keeping the Sabbath day holy.

Having established the right relationship between God and Israel, the rest of the commandments are about the right relationship among the people themselves; honoring parents, refraining from killing, adultery, stealing, bearing false witness and yearning to possess an object or a person belonging to another.

It is said that all the commandments are ways of life that apply to all times and circumstances.

Living in accord with these commandments maintains a community in which we can live in love and friendship with God and one another.

The point is the commandments are meant to help us to have good relationship with God and neighbor.

They are still the foundation of the spiritual life of the Christian Church.

What are some of the lessons for us today?

Like Jesus, God is our Father and whenever we come to his house; church we renew our relationship with him. We are also reminded that he is the source of our mission in life.

Since God's house is the place of love and belonging, we who come to his house are expected to show God's love to the people in our community and by so doing deepening our sense of belonging and fellow feeling.

To do this we should allow the commandments to guide us.

We have come half way through Lent. Let us respond to the graces that this holy season offers us by serving God and neighbor with gratitude and generosity.