

My Body is a Temple

Ex. 20: 1-17; 1 Cor. 1: 18, 22-25; Jn. 2: 13-25

In the Gospel for this Sunday, Jesus went into the Temple in Jerusalem and found money changers and animal sellers plying their trade. Becoming enraged, Jesus drove these people out of the Temple saying that His Father's house was not meant to be a marketplace. To be fair to the people of the time, the animal sellers and money changers were necessary to provide the sacrifices and offerings that the people would make. But Jesus did not want the Temple to be misused for selfish purposes. He wanted the Temple to be reserved for the worship of God, as intended.

Jesus performed a ritual cleansing or purification of the Temple, ridding it of the defilement caused by the money changers and traders. Notwithstanding the needs of the people to offer sacrifices, Jesus did not allow for any rationalization to stand in the way of keeping the Temple pure. Jesus likened the Temple to the temple of His body and He knew that He must also keep Himself pure to carry out His earthly mission. Jesus knew that rationalization was dangerous and we have found it to be true in our time as well. Rationalization inevitably leads to bending and even breaking the rules.

In the First Reading, we read about the Ten Commandments that God gave to Moses so that the Israelites would lead upright and faithful lives; lives that were pleasing to God. The Commandments were simple and straight-forward; easily understood.

But after Moses brought the Ten Commandments to the Israelites, we read Bible accounts of their idol-worship, adultery, covetousness, and murder. Many people did not like to follow the Commandments, even if they were for their own good.

Bending and breaking God's Commandments has continued up to the present day. Down through the centuries, people have been putting forward rational arguments for breaking the Commandments. In our own time, we have rationalized murder in the forms of medical assistance in dying (MAiD), or lethal injection as Cardinal Collins calls it, and abortion.

Just as Jesus spoke of His body as a temple that He would rebuild in three days, our bodies are temples also; temples of the Holy Spirit. St. Augustine referred to our human temples as follows: 'Human beings themselves are the temple where God's gifts are asked for and received.' Therefore, just as Jesus wished to keep His temple pure, so we should always strive to purify our temples by adhering to God's Commandments as strictly as possible and not allowing rationalization to creep in.

We have been given this time of Lent to reflect on our relationship with God through prayer, fasting and almsgiving; all of this to draw ever closer to Him. We would do well to consider the ways in which we have allowed ourselves to rationalize how we keep God's commandments. How often have we thought that we are wiser than God? How often have we thought that following God's Commandments would make us appear weak in the eyes of the world? Let us keep in mind the words of St. Paul: 'For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.'

Let this Lenten season be a time of conversion and repentance; a time of cleansing;. Let us drive out rationalization from our thinking and resolve to lead upright lives. Let us purify our 'temples' through the Sacrament of Reconciliation and prayer so that we may fully realize the joy of Easter.