

ZEAL FOR THE HOUSE OF GOD

3rd SUNDAY OF LENT - GOSPEL, JOHN 2:13-22

Today's First Reading is taken from the Book of Exodus 20:1-17. In it the people of Israel receive from God the TEN COMMANDMENTS, that will make them stand out among other nations, as different and unique.

Unlike other peoples, Israel will worship only ONE GOD. HE is the ONE who delivered them from slavery while they lived in Egypt, and provided for them in the desert during their journey towards the Promised Land.

God reminds Israel that He loves them with a "jealous love", therefore they are to serve and adore no one else but Him, since there is no other god, but the God of Israel.

The people are expected to treat each other with the same respect as they would like to be treated: respect for the life and the property of their neighbour.

At the time of Jesus, the people of Israel were well established in their own land, though under the Roman Empire occupation. They also had their own Temple where they could worship God and offer sacrifices.

Today's Gospel presents Jesus arriving at the Temple, and chasing away merchants that were selling animals and doing money currency exchange. Jesus' gesture is very strong, daring and seemingly one of a revolutionary!

The religious authorities are upset, and ask him with what authority he could do what he did!

Was Jesus trying to be a religious reformer, or a political one?

As Pope Benedict XVI wrote in his book "Jesus of Nazareth", Jesus was not trying to be either, otherwise the Temple police would have intervened.

With his gesture, Jesus was actually upholding the Law. He had noticed the abuse and disrespectful behaviour within the sacred spaces, and acted accordingly to rectify the desecration taking place.

That is why his disciples "remembered" later that Jesus had acted according to the Psalm "ZEAL FOR YOUR HOUSE WILL CONSUME ME" (Psalm 69:9).

The Religious leaders had become indifferent towards practices of worship; their religiosity was only external appearance; the offering of sacrifices had become an empty ritual, which allowed desecration, and had turned the sacred Temple courts into noisy market place!

This is why Jesus intervened so forcefully!

What about us?

HOW DO WE TREAT THE SACRED SPACES IN OUR CATHOLIC CHURCHES? - HOW DO WE TREAT THE SACRAMENTS? - HOW DO WE APPROACH HOLY COMMUNION?

ARE WE AWARE THAT IT IS THE SAME JESUS IN HIS HUMANITY AND DIVINITY IN THE SACRED HOST? -

DO WE APPROACH THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION WITH THE PROPER DISPOSITION?

ARE WE PRAYING AND READING THE BIBLE EVERY DAY?

THIS TIME OF PANDEMIC SHOULD HELP US REFOCUS ON OUR FAITH AND RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. - REMEMBER: HE LOVES YOU.

THERE IS STILL TIME FOR A NEW BEGINNING, AND ACQUIRE REAL ZEAL FOR THE HOUSE OF GOD.