

## Jesus Goes Ballistic?

*Third Sunday in Lent*

*John 2: 13-25*

We continue our Lenten journey.

And we are given—to help us on our way

—this gospel passage from John, chapter 2:

the powerful incident of the cleansing of the Temple,  
which the synoptic gospel writers place towards the end of their gospels.

Why does John place it at the very beginning of Jesus' ministry,

as Jesus' second ministerial act?

It is rather intense, when you think about it.

Jesus is first seen partying at Cana

—where he makes more than enough wine for everyone,

and then engaged in this intimidating Spring cleaning of the Temple.

I think it is because both incidents—in their own way—point to

- what is to come
- the Cross and Resurrection

Everything that Jesus says and does finds its culmination at the Cross,

if the Cross is the ultimate pouring forth of love...

Jesus comes to share the heart of God,

and at the Cross He does so supremely.

“No greater love has a person than to lay down his life for His friends.”

Of course, when we speak of the Cross,

we speak also of the manifestation and fruit of the victory of the Cross:

the Resurrection.

Lent is all about discovering this friend, *the* friend:

Jesus, who gives us everything, every last drop of love.

So, as a good Jew, Jesus goes to the Temple for the feast of Passover.

He goes to find that this house of prayer

is not being used exactly as He would like.

Now, keep in mind that the vendors he encounters

are not selling just anything.

They are not selling cigarettes and ice cream and Jewish People magazine.

They are selling that which is used for sacrifice in the Temple.

And the money-changers are there

to exchange Roman coins for Jewish coins,

which can then be placed in the collection basket

(they even had a collection basket back then!).

So, it is not that outrageous a scenario.  
Yet Jesus goes ballistic.  
He makes a whip out of cords, evicts persons and animals, overturns tables.  
What is going on?!?

There is obviously more than meets the eye,  
even if what meets the eye is already not ideal.  
There is more than meets the eye  
in the hearts of the buyers and sellers in the forecourt of the Temple.  
They have made the Father's house into a marketplace  
by virtue of what is in their hearts.  
Their hearts are not turned towards the Father.  
In the Temple, hearts are turned towards the Father, towards God.

It pains Jesus when His Father is not loved and respected.  
It pains Jesus when those who have been gifted to do so  
do not turn their hearts towards the Father.  
The vulnerability of Jesus' heart is shown.  
We must be careful not to misinterpret:  
Jesus is not lashing out, but showing the zeal of love.  
And in showing such zeal, he sets things right.

Now, it is striking how Jesus responds when asked to justify His actions.  
He gives no explanation.  
He offers no apology.  
He prophecies! How amazing.  
"Destroy this Temple, and, in three days, I will raise it up."  
What?!?  
The implications of what Jesus says are tremendous.  
Suffice it to say for now that the Temple becomes a metaphor,  
which Jesus uses in challenging fashion.  
Without faith,  
without some deep inner sense that leads beyond what meets the eye,  
His listeners must have thought he was crazy.  
Rebuild a temple that it has taken forty-six years to build?  
Nice try: not happening.

Faith takes the listeners who want to a prophecy about His body.  
Jesus is to die, and rise in the very body they crucified.  
Divine power and love have the last word, *always* have the last word.

The new Temple, i.e. the new place of encounter between God and man, is the God-man (more specifically, in a sense, the *body* of the God-man). It only makes sense.

And the love which animates Jesus' heart as He gives His life, and in which He rises, is the love which makes of us the temple of God. By divine love, we are the body of Christ, we are the Temple of God

The zeal we see manifested here is thus the zeal Jesus has for each of us. Do we believe it?

Do you truly believe that God would go ballistic for you when the sacredness of who you are as a child of God is not respected? Each of us is a temple, and together we form a temple.

Saint Augustine says in His commentary on the Psalms:

**The temple of God, this body of Christ, this assembly of believers, has but one voice, and sings as though it were but one person. If we wish, it is our voice; if we wish, we may listen to the singer with our ears and ourselves sing in our hearts. But if we choose not to do so it will mean that we are like buyers and sellers, preoccupied with our own interests.**

The choice is ours, today, each day:

- to fix our eyes and hearts on the God-man
- to welcome the zeal of divine love, that it burn our hearts
- to be, individually and together, the Temple of God where the joy knows no end