



# LIVING THE GOSPEL



**Third Sunday of Lent  
March 4, 2024**

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**Theme: "Zeal for thy house will consume me."**

## **Gathering Prayer**

**All:** O God, author of every mercy and of all goodness, who in fasting, prayer and almsgiving have shown us a remedy for sin, look graciously on this confession of our lowliness, that we, who are bowed down by our conscience, may always be lifted up by your mercy. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## **Exploring the Word**

### **Gospel Reading: John 2:13-25**

<sup>13</sup> The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers at their business. <sup>15</sup> And making a whip of cords, he drove them all, with the sheep and oxen, out of the temple; and he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. <sup>16</sup> And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; you shall not make my Father's house a house of trade." <sup>17</sup> His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for thy house will consume me." <sup>18</sup> The Jews then said to him, "What sign have you to show us for doing this?" <sup>19</sup> Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." <sup>20</sup> The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" <sup>21</sup> But he spoke of the temple of his body. <sup>22</sup> When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.

<sup>23</sup> Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs which he did; <sup>24</sup> but Jesus did not trust himself to them, <sup>25</sup> because he knew all men and needed no one to bear witness of man; for he himself knew what was in man.

### **Gospel Focus**

The anger and suspicion Jesus displays in this gospel are hard to reconcile with the Jesus we usually see in the gospel. Jesus usually encounter sinners with patience, calling them to conversion by offering them an encounter with God's unfailing love. But this episode reminds us that he is fully human. He is not a one-dimensional character; he is not limited to whichever characteristics that resonate for us. He experiences the full range of human emotion, including anger. While this emotion can lead, many of us

to sin, this gospel passage makes it clear that the anger itself is not a sin. Jesus himself experienced even forceful anger. But this was anger in the face of evil, and it is channeled productively to restore sanctity to the temple. Jesus gives us a model even for how to be angry, and is with us whenever our anger at sin drives us to make the world a better place.

## **Gospel Reflection**

Have you ever puzzled over what to give someone who has everything? We face a similar dilemma when we try to figure out what response we can make to the total, free self-gift of God to us. So does God in the Decalogue, or Ten Commandments. God has taken the initiative, leading Israel out of slavery in Egypt. How can Israel respond to such a gift of loving kindness?

The Decalogue spells out ten specific ways to be faithful. First and foremost is single-hearted devotion to God. No other being or thing is to be at the centre of our attention. Second, the sacred name is to be held in reverence; it is not to be used in false oaths or in profanity, since the name carries the identity and power of the person. Third is observance of the Sabbath. One day a week God wants to spend time with us to relish the joy of being together. The second half of the Decalogue gives examples of how love of God goes hand in hand with loving care of other people.

The God who asks this response of us offers ardent love. The Hebrew word *qanna* in Exodus 20:5, often translated as "jealous," can have the connotation "ardor" or "zeal." The way we choose to respond to this fervent offer of love carries consequences, and the effects ripple down to subsequent generations. It is not so much that God threatens punishment if we do not follow the divine commands, as that rejected love leads to unhappy consequences.

In addition to keeping the commandments, faithfulness to God was expressed through temple worship. All four gospels tell of an incident when Jesus performed a protest action in the temple. It is difficult to know the intent of the historical Jesus, and each evangelist gives a slightly different theological interpretation. In the Gospel of John, Jesus quotes the prophet Zechariah, who spoke of an ideal day when there would no longer be traders in the house of God (Zech 14:21). It may be that Jesus is challenging the attitudes of economic exchange that underlie sacrificial thinking: if we offer this sacrifice to God, then God will forgive our sins or bestow blessings.

Repeatedly the Scriptures counter this tit-for-tat notion telling how God's love and gifts are offered unconditional. The Fourth Evangelist emphasises that it is Jesus' very person that embodies God's ardent love. It is not in any building but in the person of Jesus that we encounter God. When Jesus' disciple recall Psalm 69:10. "Zeal for my house will consume me," there is a double meaning. *House* can refer both to the temple and to God's "household." The zealous love that Jesus enfleshes for members of God's household not only fills him but literally consumes, or destroys, his life. No sacrifice can be offered in exchange for this gift. The only response is to believe and act toward others with consummate love.

## **Old/New Testament and CCC links**

### **First Reading — Exodus 20:1-17**

<sup>1</sup> And God spoke all these words, saying, <sup>2</sup> "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

<sup>3</sup> "You shall have no other gods before me.

<sup>4</sup> "You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the

earth; <sup>5</sup> you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, <sup>6</sup> but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

<sup>7</sup> "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

<sup>8</sup> "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. <sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; <sup>10</sup> but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates; <sup>11</sup> for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.

<sup>12</sup> "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the LORD your God gives you.

<sup>13</sup> "You shall not kill. <sup>14</sup> "You shall not commit adultery. <sup>15</sup> "You shall not steal. <sup>16</sup> "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. <sup>17</sup> "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's."

## **Responsorial Psalm — Ps 19:8, 9, 10, 11**

***R: Lord, you have the words of everlasting life.***

The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul;  
the decree of the Lord is trustworthy, giving wisdom to the simple. **(R)**

The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;  
the command of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eye. **(R)**

The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever;  
the ordinances of the Lord are true, all of them just. **(R)**

They are more precious than gold, than a heap of purest gold;  
sweeter also than syrup or honey from the comb. **(R)**

## **Second Reading — 1 Corinthians 1:22-25**

<sup>22</sup> For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, <sup>23</sup> but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup> but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup> For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

## **Catechism of The Catholic Church**

**473.** But at the same time, this truly human knowledge of God's Son expressed the divine life of his person. (Cf. St. Gregory the Great, "Sicut aqua" ad Eulogium, Epist. Lib. 10, 39 PL 77, 1097 Aff.; DS 475) "The human nature of God's Son, *not by itself but by its union with the Word*, knew and showed forth in itself everything that pertains to God." (St. Maximus the Confessor, Qu. et dub. 66 PG 90, 840A) Such is first of all the case with the intimate and immediate knowledge that the Son of God made man has of his Father. (Cf. Mk 14:36; Mt 11:27; Jn 1:18; 8:55; etc) The Son in his human

knowledge also showed the divine penetration he had into the secret thoughts of human hearts.(Cf. Mk 2:8; Jn 2 25; 6:61; etc)

**575.** Many of Jesus' deeds and words constituted a "sign of contradiction", (Lk 2:34) but more so for the religious authorities in Jerusalem, whom the Gospel according to John often calls simply "the Jews", (Cf. Jn 1:19; 2:18; 5:10; 7:13; 9:22; 18:12; 19:38; 20:19) than for the ordinary People of God. (Jn 7:48-49) To be sure, Christ's relations with the Pharisees were not exclusively polemical. Some Pharisees warn him of the danger he was courting; (Cf Lk 13:31) Jesus praises some of them, like the scribe of *Mark* 12:34, and dines several times at their homes. (Cf. Lk 7:36; 14:1) Jesus endorses some of the teachings imparted by this religious elite of God's people: the resurrection of the dead, (Cf. Mt 22:23-34; Lk 20:39) certain forms of piety (almsgiving, fasting and prayer), (Cf. Mt 6:18) the custom of addressing God as Father, and the centrality of the commandment to love God and neighbor. (Cf. Mk 12:28-34)

**583.** Like the prophets before him Jesus expressed the deepest respect for the Temple in Jerusalem. It was in the Temple that Joseph and Mary presented him forty days after his birth. (Lk 2:22-39) At the age of twelve he decided to remain in the Temple to remind his parents that he must be about his Father's business. (Cf. Lk 2 46-49) He went there each year during his hidden life at least for Passover. (Cf. Lk 2 41) His public ministry itself was patterned by his pilgrimages to Jerusalem for the great Jewish feasts. (Cf. Jn 2 13-14; 5:1, 14; 7:1, 10, 14; 8 2; 10:22-23)

**584.** Jesus went up to the Temple as the privileged place of encounter with God. For him, the Temple was the dwelling of his Father, a house of prayer, and he was angered that its outer court had become a place of commerce. (Cf. Mt 21:13) He drove merchants out of it because of jealous love for his Father: "You shall not make my Father's house a house of trade. His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.'" (Jn 2:16-17; cf. Ps 69:10) After his Resurrection his apostles retained their reverence for the Temple. (Cf. Acts 2:46; 3:1; 5:20, 21; etc)

**586.** Far from having been hostile to the Temple, where he gave the essential part of his teaching, Jesus was willing to pay the Temple-tax, associating with him Peter, whom he had just made the foundation of his future Church. (Cf. Mt 8:4; 16:18; 17:24-27; Lk 17:14; Jn 4:22; 18:20) He even identified himself with the Temple by presenting himself as God's definitive dwelling-place among men. (Cf. Jn 2:21; Mt 12:6) Therefore his being put to bodily death (Cf. Jn 2:18-22) presaged the destruction of the Temple, which would manifest the dawning of a new age in the history of salvation: "The hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father." (Jn 4:21; cf. 4:23-24; Mt 27:5; Heb 9:11; Rev 21:22)

**994.** But there is more. Jesus links faith in the resurrection to his own person: "I am the Resurrection and the life." (Jn 11:25) It is Jesus himself who on the last day will raise up those who have believed in him, who have eaten his body and drunk his blood. (Cf. Jn 5:24-25; 6:40, 54) Already now in this present life he gives a sign and pledge of this by restoring some of the dead to life, (Cf. Mk 5:21-42; Lk 7:11-17; Jn 11) announcing thereby his own Resurrection, though it was to be of another order. He speaks of this unique event as the "sign of Jonah," (Mt 12:39) the sign of the temple: he announces that he will be put to death but rise thereafter on the third day. (Cf. Mk 10:34; Jn 2:19-22)

### **Sharing and Discussion**

1. What is generally the motivation for people to ask God for a sign?
2. What should be our attitude regarding the presence or absence of religious signs?
3. How does the angry Jesus of today's gospel make you feel? If there is any discomfort, how could that help you broaden your understanding of God?

### **Closing Prayer**

**All:** Triune God, you sent your beloved Son and Spirit into the world for the salvation of creation. Hear our prayers that we might grow in our awareness of the divine presence in our world and reflect that presence to everyone we meet. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Leader:** May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

**All:** Amen