

Third Sunday of Lent
March 4, 2018

Jesus really gets into it today. The gospel is very intense. Our Lord comes into the Temple and really mixes things up. If there is one thing that our Lord has very little patience with, it's insincere and fake religion. He is always on the case of the Pharisees who often preached one thing and did another. Jesus has no patience with those who corrupt and taint the holy and the sacred.

In the time and place of Jesus the Temple was everything. It was the center of religious, social, and economic life. It was the place where God dwelt. Here in this church we strive to maintain an atmosphere of the sacred. We genuflect, we pray, we sing, and we conduct sacred ritual. Those who chew gum, dress down, or don't even bother to come, those who are reckless and casual with the sacred, could be an easy target in this homily.

But when we are pointing the finger, there are three fingers pointing back at us. The gospel is not for other people. The gospel is speaking to me. And of course, the Temple that is being talked about is not the one at the time and place of Jesus. The Temple, the place where God resides, is your own heart and soul. That is where God lives.

It's time to clear out the spiritual trash. It is time for a spring cleaning of our soul. I am one of the greatest offenders. I have a propensity for letting things accumulate. You should see my garage. You should see my workshop. Worst of all, you should see my desk. There usually comes a time when it gets so bad that I can't function. I have to clean house. Poor Marge. As housekeeper here at Sacred Heart for the last 26 years, there is good cause for her canonization. When Bishop Callahan was here a couple weeks ago he commented on how the Rectory was so much like a home. Marge doesn't let me trash the place. The garage, the shop, and my desk are my responsibility. The rest is off-limits. Thank God for Marge. But the housecleaning of my soul can only be done by Jesus and me.

Marge tells the story about when her son did not clean his room. She backed up their truck to the window of his room. She opened the window and started throwing out the toys. You can imagine, her son got busy real fast.

Let Jesus loose in your soul. Let him throw things around a bit. Throw out the junk. Whatever is in me that is not dedicated to the honor and glory of God needs to be removed. It always feels so good and refreshing when my desk is clean. Even more so when my soul is renewed.

The first reading today offers us a simple guide. It is the 10 Commandments. St. Thomas Aquinas said that the 10 Commandments are nothing more than the fundamental principles of the natural law. We really don't have to be told what is right and wrong. We instinctively sense what must be

done, especially regarding the workings of our interior life. There is a moral imperative planted in our soul. It's common sense.

We are almost at the halfway point of Lent. Take this opportunity to do a searching moral inventory of your life. Every aspect of your life, your mind, your will, your heart, your desires, your family and friends, your entertainment, are meant to be dedicated to God. When the interior castle of your heart is all in order, when the trash is thrown out, you will experience a new springtime of life. You will take possession and ownership of the hope and joy of Easter.

Confession services for Lent start this week. We begin at our own parish of St. Alexander's. Several priests will be there next Wednesday at 6:30 PM. After that, on Thursday we will be at St. Vincent's in Wisconsin Rapids. Look in your bulletin for the complete schedule. Plan ahead and make it happen.