

Third Sunday of Lent



The effects of untreated addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments have enormous consequences on our communities and culture. Individuals and families are experiencing darkness and an increased reliance on substances like alcohol, drugs, and food; behavioral addictions such as gambling, sexual acting out, and cluttering; obsessive thoughts of control, worry, and plotting; and compulsive reactions that leave us feeling remorse and shame.

We have each felt the impact of these symptoms that come from quenching our thirst for God with things other than God. Unless we seek radical help, these substances and behaviors remain idols and barriers to finding a personal relationship with Jesus.

This Sunday's Gospel Reading showcases a unique side of Jesus that reflects his understanding of human nature and passion for removing idols that stand between God and us:

*Since the Passover of the Jews was near,
Jesus went up to Jerusalem.
He found in the temple area those who sold oxen,
sheep, and doves,
as well as the money changers seated there.
He made a whip out of cords
and drove them all out of the temple area, with the
sheep and oxen,
and spilled the coins of the money changers
and overturned their tables,
and to those who sold doves he said,
"Take these out of here,
and stop making my Father's house a marketplace."
His disciples recalled the words of Scripture,
Zeal for your house will consume me.
At this the Jews answered and said to him,
"What sign can you show us for doing this?"
Jesus answered and said to them,
"Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it
up."
The Jews said,
"This temple has been under construction for forty-
six years,
and you will raise it up in three days?"
But he was speaking about the temple of his body.*

The zeal of Christ's devotion to his Father, as well as his humanity, is on full display in this scene. We can believe that he feels the same passion toward bringing us into union with God, despising the addictions and compulsions that separate us from Him while loving us without condition.

When Jesus asks us to change our ways and destroy the ungodly temples that we worship, we might respond like the Jews in this Gospel story. We spent a long time constructing what we thought would be our path to happiness (and maybe even holiness). We convinced ourselves and tried to convince others that it was the right way, peeking out of the despair that we continually put ourselves in. Despite contrary evidence, we were sure we could manage this on our own.

When we surrender our addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments to Jesus, he promises a pathway toward freedom and the strength to overcome. "God is faithful and will not let you be tried beyond your strength; but with the trial he will also provide a way out, so that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor 10:13).

The false idols that we bring to the foot of the cross during Lent and throughout the year are resurrected in ways we can never predict. Letting go of the expectations we have for our own personal re-build will make cooperation with the Divine Architect far more fruitful.

Reflection Questions

- What kind of radical changes were made in your life to help free you from the darkness of addiction?
- What helped you recognize that you could not manage life on your own and how did you seek God's help?
- What are the tools that God is using to rebuild a new foundation for your life?

Additional Resources Available Online

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Exodus 20:1-17

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 11

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:22-25

Gospel: John 2:13-25