

3rd Sunday of the Lent- Homily – Fr. Antony Chundelikkat

1st Reading: Ex 20:1-7, Responsorial Psalm: Ps 19:8, 9, 10, 11,

Reading 2: 1 Cor 1:22-25, Gospel: Jn 2: 13-25

Today's first reading teaches us that the Ten Commandments are the basis of our religious and spiritual life.

The responsorial Psalm (Ps 19) depicts the Mosaic Law's life-enhancing attributes: it refreshes the soul and rejoices the heart; it is pure and true, more precious than gold.

The second reading reminds us that we must appreciate the Divine "foolishness" of the crucified Christ and obey His commandment of love as our expression of Divine worship.

Today's Gospel gives us the dramatic account of Jesus' cleansing the Temple. A little girl was taken to the Church for the first time. As she was leaving with her parents, the pastor asked how she had liked the Mass. She replied, "I liked the music and the prayers," "but the commercial was too long." Jesus made his way to Jerusalem and went up to the Temple to pray and to preach the Good News. The Temple was a universal house of God "for all the nations" where every man or woman on earth would find a place in which to pray. But the Temple priests forgot that and thought that it was meant only for Jews. The Temple area covered some 35 acres, which had five courts. The Temple priests decided to turn the court of the Gentiles into a "holy" marketplace for selling the animals required for sacrifice and for exchanging money. The court of Gentiles was no longer regarded as part of the house of God, it had become a marketplace, pure and simple. The merchants sold the animals and birds for sacrifice at unjust and excessive prices 18 to 20 times the regular price outside the Temple. What was happening was a great social injustice done in the name of religion. Now it was this court of Gentiles that Jesus cleansed. In so doing he was making the point that the Gentile section

was just as holy as the Jewish sections. Jesus' promise of a new Temple suggested that God's glory would be manifested, not in a building, but in a person. St. Paul reminds us that we are God's temples because the Spirit of God dwells in us. Hence, we have no right to desecrate God's temple by impurity, injustice, pride, hatred, or jealousy. The story is told of a priest who was coming back to his parish house one evening in the dark and stopped by a robber who pulled a gun at him and demanded, "Your money or your life!" As the priest reached his hand into his coat pocket the robber saw his Roman collar and said, oh "So you are a priest? Then you can go." The priest was rather surprised at this unexpected show of piety and so tried to reciprocate by offering the robber his packet of cigarettes, to which the robber replied, "No, Father, I don't smoke during Lent." We ourselves must be cleansed of all that does not lead us to God. There are questions that confront us today. We need to avoid a calculating mentality in Divine worship. That is to say our relationship with God must be that of a child to his parent, one of mutual love. We are temples of the Holy Spirit. Christ cleanses the physical temple in Jerusalem of all that is not leading people to God. Have we ever "turned our Father's house into a marketplace?" - our hearts and minds are where God the Holy Spirit lives.