

28. May 2021

“The temple needs purification”

Mk 11:11-25

He entered Jerusalem and went into the Temple; and when he had surveyed it all, as it was late by now, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve. Next day as they were leaving Bethany, he felt hungry. Seeing a fig tree in leaf some distance away, he went to see if he could find any fruit on it, but when he came up to it he found nothing but leaves; for it was not the season for figs. And he addressed the fig tree, 'May no one ever eat fruit from you again.' And his disciples heard him say this. So they reached Jerusalem and he went into the Temple and began driving out the men selling and buying there; he upset the tables of the money changers and the seats of the dove sellers. Nor would he allow anyone to carry anything through the Temple. And he taught them and said, 'Does not scripture say: My house will be called a house of prayer for all peoples? But you have turned it into a bandits' den.' This came to the ears of the chief priests and the scribes, and they tried to find some way of doing away with him; they were afraid of him because the people were carried away by his teaching. And when evening came he went out of the city. Next morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree withered to the roots. Peter remembered. 'Look, Rabbi,' he said to Jesus, 'the fig tree that you cursed has withered away.' Jesus answered, 'Have faith in God. In truth I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, "Be pulled up and thrown into the sea," with no doubt in his heart, but believing that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. I tell you, therefore, everything you ask and pray for, believe that you have it already, and it will be yours. And when you stand in prayer, forgive whatever you have against anybody, so your Father in heaven may forgive your failings too.'

A temple is a house of prayer.

In today's Gospel we see the Lord defending the honour of God. It is an insult to the heavenly Father and a terrible alienation when the temple is misused for actions that do not correspond to its dignity.

What was true of the Temple in Jerusalem is equally true of our churches. When secular events and abuses take place in churches, they become "bandits' dens" and, in the worst case, even places of demons. But this provokes the "wrath" of God, as we see with Jesus in today's Gospel account.

Unfortunately, such things happen not infrequently and we may and should even ask ourselves whether God has not allowed the present painful restrictions in church life, in order to make us emphatically aware of such abuses.

How many sacrileges occur at the reception of Holy Communion? What will the Lord say if politicians - even if they are American presidents - support and promote the terrible crime of abortion and at the same time receive Holy Communion from the bishop of their diocese? What is a “Pachamama” doing in the Vatican Gardens and St. Peter's Basilica? Why do consecrated church rooms have to be converted into dining halls? What atrocities occur when priests bless homosexual unions without being corrected by their bishops? How many liturgical abuses occur daily and thus alienations and banalisations of the Holy Mass?

This list could go on and we would be shocked at the irreverence and desacralisations that happen in our consecrated churches without the necessary penance and atonement.

Exaggerated? No!

Certainly not, given Jesus' reaction to conditions in the Temple. He drove out those who desecrated the holy precinct. This must also happen in our church. May the Lord purify all that does not belong to the Church! Believers and also other people must not be confused. They should know clearly what is Catholic and what is not Catholic, what is holy and what is profane, what is true and what is false, what is sin and what is not sin.

It is time for purification to happen! The Lord is very patient with us. But insults to God, such as are done by actions that attack His honour and defile the “Temple”, must cease. They have no right to existence in His Church!

The chief priests and the scribes reacted as we know them to do. The divine authority, which is shown in the words and actions of Jesus, threatens them. They do not receive the message of the Lord, nor recognise in Jesus the righteous jealousy and the “wrath of God”, which should actually be known to them through the Holy Scriptures and the history of their people; but instead, they want to kill the One who makes them aware of it.

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you!” (Mt 23:37a)

So it will probably always be unless there is a right conversion to God. And this is what we must pray for daily: For our own and for that of all people.