

22. February 2023

LENTEN ITINERARY

Day 9: "The Purification of the Temple"

Having heard in yesterday's reading how the "wrath of the Lord" because of the wickedness of the City of Nineveh was appeased by the penitence of its inhabitants, so that the punishment did not fall on them, it is fitting that today we meditate on the passage of the purification of the Temple (Mt 21:12-13), which was the Gospel of the Traditional Mass two days ago.

Jesus was scandalised by those who did business in the sacred precincts, thus offending against the sanctity and dignity of the Temple. The Lord is not content with admonishing the merchants, but drives them out and overturns their tables and stalls. St. John the Evangelist relates this passage in these terms:

"Making a whip out of cord, Jesus drove them all out of the Temple, sheep and cattle as well, scattered the money changers' coins, knocked their tables over and said to the dove sellers, 'Take all this out of here and stop using my Father's house as a market.' Then his disciples remembered the words of scripture: I am eaten up with zeal for your house" (Jn 2:15-17).

The reason given by the Lord to justify His reaction is clear:

"According to scripture, my house will be called a house of prayer; but you are turning it into a bandits' den" (Mt 21:13).

We find here an angry Jesus with a holy wrath. Even in a person of faith this anger can flare up when he sees the Majesty of God offended. Let us remember the gesture that was customary among the Jews when they saw God being blasphemed: they tore their garments.

It is therefore good for us too to question ourselves honestly:

Is the dignity of our temples, in which we offer the Holy Sacrifice, being sufficiently respected? Does our own behaviour when we are in church correspond to the holiness of God? Do we know how to remain in holy silence while in the sacred precincts? Are our churches not being misused when they are used for events that do not have the

3glorification of God as their direct object? Are Holy Masses being celebrated with dignity or are they being disfigured by trivialisation?

In this passage of Scripture we see how vehemently Jesus reacts when He sees the dignity of the Temple, which is the House of the Father, offended.

What will the Lord say when He sees that in Germany and Austria, for example, priests are blessing homosexual couples, and that now, through the declaration *Fiducia Supplicans*, this practice is to be extended to the whole Church? What will He say about giving Holy Communion to people who are not in a state of grace? What will He say about a figure of Pachamama being brought into St. Peter's Basilica with gestures of reverence, about churches being used as canteens, about "vaccination centres" being set up in cathedrals?

Could this be pleasing to God, and does it not rather inflame His "wrath" and make Him purify the Temple once more?

The cleansing of the Temple that Jesus performs in this gospel passage also applies to our own person, because we are "*God's temple*" (1 Cor 3:16). The Lord wants to make His dwelling place in us. Therefore, it is important that we cooperate with God's grace in our inner purification, because in the temple of our heart He is to be glorified. May the Lord drive out everything that should have no place there! St. Paul tells us:

"Do you not realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you and whom you received from God?" (1 Cor 6:19). Therefore, *"you must not allow sin to reign over your mortal bodies ... Instead, give yourselves to God, as people brought to life from the dead, and give every part of your bodies to God to be instruments of uprightness"* (Rom 6:13).

While we, as the faithful, are called to intercede and offer sacrifices on behalf of those who do not walk in God's ways and are trapped in sin, we must also work deeply on our own purification. The Lord can also use this to reach out to other souls.

May the Lord build His Temple entirely according to His holy will and adorn it with His presence! Therefore, on our holy journey towards the Feast of the Resurrection, we should earnestly ask Him to purify us thoroughly, so that as little as possible - or better still, nothing - stands in the way of God's glorifying Himself through our life and making it as fruitful as possible.

The purification of the outer and inner Temple is urgent, so that our holy faith may shine brightly and the people of the world may know the way of salvation. Precisely in a time of great crisis, when darkness is becoming ever thicker on the face of the earth, we need to be what the Lord called us to be: "*You are the light of the world (...). You are the salt of the earth*" (Mt 5:13,14).

This would be the right response on our part, which is always important, but takes on particular urgency in times of darkness.

Meditation on the reading of the day:

<http://en.elijamission.net/i-have-no-one-but-you-lord/>

Meditation on the Gospel of the day:

<http://en.elijamission.net/the-law-and-the-prophets-2/>