

11. January 2025

Biblical meditations  
THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN  
"The Purification of the Temple"

Jn 2:13-22

*The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers at their business. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all, with the sheep and oxen, out of the temple; and he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; you shall not make my Father's house a house of trade." His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for thy house will consume me." The Jews then said to him, "What sign have you to show us for doing this?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he spoke of the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.*

The "Father's house" is the holy place where God is to be glorified through prayer and sacrifice. It must not be turned into a marketplace or a den of thieves, as Jesus says in the Synoptic Gospels (Mt 21:13; Mk 11:17; Lk 19:46). In other words, the house of God is not to be misused for other purposes. All this provokes God's wrath, as we see with Jesus in today's passage. He did not stand by and watch the spectacle in the temple, for it was a grave offence to the Lord. Jesus intervened in front of everyone to put an end to the scandal.

This decisive act of Jesus, which showed great authority, was met with opposition. The Jews wanted a sign that He was authorised to do such a thing. But they did not know to whom they were speaking; they had not recognised that Jesus was the Lord of the Temple, the Son of the Heavenly Father.

All the worship that had been going on in the temple in Jerusalem was in preparation for the coming of the One to whom the temple belonged. With the coming of Jesus into the world, the temple had completed its task, for through Jesus' death and resurrection we have been given access to a new temple: the temple of His body. The Jews could not understand when Jesus answered them, "*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*" Even His disciples did not understand until after His resurrection.

In fact, the temple in Jerusalem no longer exists because God's history with humanity has continued. Thanks to the sacrifice of the Son of God, salvation is now offered to all people in Christ. He built the holy Church, the temple in which all peoples have a place and in which the one unbloody sacrifice of Christ is celebrated, after the Messiah, as the Lamb of God, has offered himself as an everlasting sacrifice.

Many temples have been built in every corner of the world where God is worshipped and glorified with reverence and love.

However, it is questionable whether this purpose of the temple is still always respected, or whether a 'purification' is also necessary in our churches...

It is with sadness that we note that reverence has often been lost in our Church and that the liturgy has become more and more trivialised, especially since the liturgical reform that led to the 'Novus Ordo Missae'. More and more profane elements have been introduced, and in many cases the 'holy silence' that should reign in the temples has been replaced by chatter. The great treasure of sacred music, which proclaims the glory of God, has been replaced in some places by sentimental songs and instrumental interventions that no longer really lift the soul to God. As part of a misunderstanding of cultural diversity, even pagan practices are being introduced into the liturgy. In Rome, places of worship were used as dining halls when there was no need for them. In the confused times of the Covid, a vaccination centre was set up in the magnificent Vienna Cathedral. These are just a few of the things that are more than detrimental to the house of the Father of Jesus, which should be a house of prayer.

If we were to pause to meditate on the purification of the Temple, we would also have to mention its inner pollution: the unexpiated sins, the sacrileges, the poison of doctrinal and moral errors that are spreading, the deplorable confusion of the present church hierarchy. What will Jesus say and do?

It is up to Him to cleanse the temple. Our task as believers is to live our faith unadulterated and with great purity, so that the temple of our heart may be fully permeated by the presence of God. We are "*living stones*" (1 Pet 2:5), part of the temple of the body of Christ. May He purify us so that He may be pleased to look upon us and may a little temple be built within us in which the Lord dwells with joy!