**Lent III, Cycle. B. 2024.**

**Today’s Gospel Reading recalls a time when Jesus did some spring-cleaning to the Temple**. He had come to Jerusalem for the Passover. The Passover was the greatest of Jewish Feasts and it drew all kinds of pilgrims from all over the world to this capital city of Judaism to celebrate their deliverance from Egypt centuries earlier. People came from long distance and so they didn’t bring animals for sacrifice with them. They bought them on the spot. Because they came from all over the Roman Empire, the various coins they had needed to be exchanged into the **standard temple curre**ncy.

A pilgrimage to the temple was supposed to be a sacred experience. But that was destroyed by the atmosphere of the Temple where all this buying, selling and currency exchange got out of hand. At the Passover, **the Temple became a shopping mall. Merchants were selling a**nimals for the sacrifice; money changers were there trading currency at predictably exorbitant rates of exchange. When Jesus saw this **anger rose within Him**. Jesus holds a whip and ready to strike. All around him is confusion. Merchants are holding up their arms to protect themselves. Tables are turned over. Animals are running away. Coins are spilled all over the place. Bystanders are dashing for cover. What does all these mean?

**Some say it is an instance of Jesus’ righteous anger, teaching us that there is such a thing as righteous anger when we see something that is wrong**. We are also reminded that Jesus’ cleansing of the Temple was a prophecy of the cleansing He would bring to the human race. But John and the disciples remembered it as the fulfillment of prophecy that the Messiah **would purify the Temple**. The Temple needed radical cleaning at that moment and, once in a while, so do our lives. That’s’ what lent is for. Our lives need cleaning just like our homes and offices do. With the passage of time, excess baggage, useless junk and dust balls tend to accumulate. We can see that in our closet. May be the same thing happened to the Temple.

**Just as our closet and the Temple of Old Jerusalem became cluttered, our lives get cluttered in ways we never planned**. How many of us live overextended lives? Do we still have time for the children and for prayer? We need **spiritual spring-cleaning**. There are merchants **and money changers that need to be driven out** of the Temple of our lives. They are the imperfections that grew into sins; small omissions that became major areas of neglect; personal preoccupations that ripened into indifference to others; temptations that became sinful behaviors. **Lent calls us to do some spring-cleaning**.

The incident of Jesus getting angry in the Temple clearly states that anger which leads to reformation and betterment is a respectable and desirable emotion. Therefore, Lent is the Church’s’ official time **to get angry to overturn old tables and set up new ones. What new tables might we set up?**

**Todays’ First Reading gives us the Com**mandments, those ancient laws of God that sound like restrictions but, when you think about them, are actually **ways to set ourselves fr**ee. They cleanse us, heal us and free us from the idolatry of things around us so that things we consume don’t end up in consuming us. The Commandments are the ancient God-given avenues to real liberation and genuine cleansing.

**The First three Commandments remind us to let God be the only God in our life, to revere and respect everything that is connected with Him: His person, His name, His Sun**days. The fourth Commandment calls on us to respect our family relationships, especially our parents. **The fifth through eighth** Commandments remind us to respect the community of which we are a part by respecting property, truth-telling, marriage, our own and others and **respecting the sacred power of sexuality.** The last two commandments call on us to look beneath our behavior, to look within, at that secret inner world of our desires and yearnings to **see if the Gospel shapes t**hem. What do we covet or desire and, more telling, why?

**Lent is a time to cleanse our Temple, to remove and to expel in a serious and radical way all the infidelities, sins and distortions of our life.** Rubble always accumulates, good things can go bad in every life, every life needs regular spring-cleaning or else we can end up like some people who don’t even notice the sin and clutter around them anymore. That’s’ why we have the grace of the season of lent to help us clean out the Temple of our lives to make them a **place where Christ is at home and not a stranger.**

Is Christ at home in your life or does He seem to be an intruder?, Lent is a time to be dramatic and decisive, to drive out the sin and the clutter in the Temple of our lives and make room for Christ. **That picture of Jesus cleansing the temple is a reminder of what we should be doing to sin in our life.**