

Fr. Gerry Hurley
Third Sunday of Lent

The Temple Experience

Wow! What a great story in today's Gospel!

We are so familiar with it we could very easily just glide over the story and merely say, "Oh yea! I remember that one — that was the the time Jesus got really chapped in the Temple and dumped over the tables of the money changers, drove out the sheep, oxen, and doves, as well as the traders."

Well, how sad it would be if we settled for so little. Being honest with ourselves, that is all we do sometimes in the face of such circumstances. We deal with it superficially. For many Scripture scholars, this is about the zeal of Jesus! "Zeal for your house will consume me." This makes it a very different story.

As a faithful Jew, Jesus arrives in Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. People loved to come to the Temple and celebrate Passover and God's saving actions among His people. Jesus was shocked by what He found in the Temple precincts. It was a commercialization of religion and a complete desecration of the Temple. It was local traders lying in wait for the pilgrims to arrive and take advantage of them as they sold sacrificial offerings and exchanged currency so that people could pay the Temple Tax.

But, it went deeper than that!

It was a judgement on the whole sacrificial system. Religious practice had deteriorated into worthless and thoughtless practice! Jesus was declaring that Temple worship, with all of its rituals and animal sacrifices, were irrelevant, and that it was not bringing people closer to God!

Wow! Now that's a different picture!

Jesus' zeal was about the fact that He was replacing sacrificial worship with spiritual worship. Jesus was protesting the way religious celebration had become narrow, nationalistic and exclusive. He was declaring God's intention that the Temple was to be a House of Prayer for all, not just some of God's people!

What do you think Jesus would have to say about us — our Church — our worship — our practice?