

Proclamation of the Gospel

The Lord be with you.
And with your Spirit.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to St. John.
Glory to You, O Lord.

As the Jewish Passover was the year, Jesus went up to Jerusalem into the temple precincts. He came upon people engaged in selling oxen and sheep and doves, and others seated changing coins. He made it kind of a whip out of cords and He drove them all out of the temple area, the sheep and the oxen, alike. He knocked over the money changers tables spilling their coins. He told those who were selling doves, "Get them out of here. Stop turning my Father's House into a marketplace." His disciples recalled the words of Scripture, "Zeal for your house consumes me." At this the Jews responded, "What sign can you show us authorizing you to do these things?"

"Destroy this temple," He said. "And, in three days I will raise it up again." And they retorted, "This temple took 46 years to build, and you are going to raise it up in three days?" Actually, He was talking about the temple of His body. Only after Jesus had been raised from the dead, did His disciples recall that He had said this, and come to believe the Scripture and the word He had spoken. While He was in Jerusalem during the Passover Festival, many believed in His name for they could see the signs He was performing. For His part, Jesus would not trust Himself to them because He knew them all. He needed no one to give Him testimony about human nature. He was well aware of what was in the person's heart.

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily by Fr. Gerry Hurley

Houston, we've got a problem. I asked somebody to move their car before Mass, and thank you, they did. But four more people duly moved in right behind and took up the spot. So, I want to encourage you please be attentive to the parking. We have it laid out in a manner to really help us out. I have a very enthusiastic man who wants to be the police for that and he was offered his services, but he's busy this weekend. But, being attentive to that — we have it designed so that should we need an ambulance or something, which we have had on occasion before, or should we have to have access for some reason, it's a little in the way. But, thank you to that person who moved their car. Then, the other people duly came around and one after another seemed to line up behind it. So, please, let's be attentive to that. It's helping everybody else.

The Gospel — an invitation to be aware of Temple practice. Why do we come? Why do we come to church? We see in Jesus, many people remember the Parable because they say Jesus was really chapped, you know? He was pretty upset when he came into the temple precincts. Much more important than Him being upset was why was He upset? He was upset because th

many of the great Scripture scholars would say, it was about the zeal that He had for His Father's House to become a great place of worship for people. He wanted it to be an all inclusive place, and some people really got that. The Jewish people, many of them, particularly those who were righteous, they felt — well, this is where we come and really experience God. Now there's a convenience in that because if this is the place that I come to experience God, then it may mean I don't have to experience Him throughout my week, or in other areas, or other places.

That was a part of the issue that Jesus was addressing. You can't just come to Temple and take care of that. This is a growing relationship. That would be a stagnant relationship. What Jesus was also addressing was that people were lying in wait for the pilgrims to come. It was Passover and good Jews loved to flock to Jerusalem. It was like a pilgrimage to the holy place, the Temple. They would come. They had prescriptions for them when they came. They had to offer a sacrifice. It was usually two young pigeons, a turtle dove or a bullock, if they were really kind of well-off. And so Jesus saw them. It was impractical for them to bring the sacrificial offerings from their own territory when they traveled long journeys. So they would purchase them in the temple precincts. Likewise, when they came annually for Passover, they were obliged to pay the Temple tax, and they wouldn't have had the Roman coins to pay the tax or the specific coin — a very special coin which came from Tyre, that place Tyre and Sidon, because they had a silver mint there, and they had special coins that the Romans knew. It was about 80% to 82% true. The other silver coins had about 60%, and they wanted these specialized coins. People, particularly pilgrims, they exchanged their money so that they could give the offering. Jesus was saying, hey you can't be taking advantage of people like this.

It's the same thing I tell people when they come to Ireland. Hey, don't exchange your money in the airport. They know you're coming and they're waiting. They're pretty happy about your coming, but there's nothing illegal for them to charge a higher exchange rate, and then to add on a transaction fee as well. Hey, wait till you get out of the airport, right? Hey, let's get out in the country a little bit, and man, the banks there are certainly more practical.

Jesus saw that happened in the temple precincts, and that's why He was disturbed. He said the temple ought to be a place where people are welcomed. For Jews, particularly for the religious leadership, it was their selfishly guarded secret. If you were a sinner, you weren't very welcome inside of the precincts, you know, if you take care of this, and if you do this. So, it was not open to all people. It was not a place where people could be reconciled and forgiven. It was a place for the righteous, and Jesus had seen it. Now, He was addressing it head on. He saying, folks — the stuff that you are doing, it's not getting people any place. It's not getting you any place. This sacrificial offering, and all of this production, it's not bringing anybody closer to God. In fact, it's making God a very judgmental God. And that is not my Father.

So, that was the instrumental piece, and as we look at that it certainly asks the question of ourselves, why do we come to Temple? We've talked about it a number of times before. Why do you come? What are your hopes? What are your expectations? As I've said, during the Lenten experience then we would look at — how do we maintain a balance in our lives in various areas? We talked about the scales, and how do we restore balance?

Two weeks ago, we talked about restoring a balance between two things — what two things? Do you remember? Yeah. We talked about having a balance between — what I'm going to do for God, right? And what God desires to do for me. A balance between what I desire to do for

God. And we are very well-equipped, particularly us as Catholics. We're very well-equipped in that department. From our earliest days, we've talked about things that we're going to give to God. When it comes it to Lent, I'm gonna give up candy, and I'm gonna to do this, and I'm gonna do an extra Mass. I'm gonna be nicer to my brothers and sisters, and I'm going to go on and on. I'm gonna do all of these things for God. Hey, there needs to be a balance in my life. How would I know if God was telling me that He would like me to do something different, perhaps? If I make all the decisions and determinations, it's not going to be very helpful. It's certainly not going to build a great relationship. It's about having a relationship with Him. So, how do I restore a balance between — what God might want to accomplish or bring about in my life, and what I'm going to do for Him? Because if I just keep on going gung ho about what I'm going to do, it's a very unbalanced experience, and really would be difficult to experience a relationship.

And then we built on that by saying, let's look at an examination of conscience. You know, that one? You know that one as Catholics? Hey, we're pretty expert at it. We can find the fault in ourselves, and man we have lists to beat the band to help us examine our conscience, and find the fault, and find the sin. If you really want to feel bad. If you don't feel bad already, try these examinations of conscience. They are all designed to help you find fault after fault. There's another side — an examination of consciousness. How conscious am I of God in my life? I can examine my conscience all day and not know God. I can find the fault in myself and not have a relationship with Him. I can have a relationship with myself, and improve myself, and say I'm gonna take care of this attitude, and this behavior, and this vice and whatever. It doesn't mean I have a relationship with Him. The balancing experience is — an examination of consciousness. How conscious am I of God during my day? Do I invite Him to be part of my work? Do I invite Him when I going to this meeting, to travel with me? Do I invite Him when I sit in my car, Lord, sit in with me and speak to me, and be in me, and act in me, and help me to act appropriately and responsibly? What is my consciousness of God?

And then I told about it last week — the idea of consciousness and balancing the “I” and the “We” — do you remember? The rest of you remember? No? Okay. How important. How important is that one piece! That I look at hey, how did I invite Him to be a part of my life throughout the day? Did I invite Him to come to that meeting with me? As I went to the hospital, did I invite Him to come and visit that person, be with me, be present to me? How am I gonna grow in a relationship unless I try to bring it into consciousness. It's a very important little piece!

Then I said as George Ashenbrenner said, “At the end of the day, I weigh the “I” and the “We.” I got up in the morning — was it “I” or was “We?” I got in my car, I showered and got ready for work — was it “I” or was “We?” Was I conscious of His presence? Was I speaking to Him, being responsive and attentive to Him? I got in my car and drove to work — was it “I” or was “We?” I went into work, and then I totally forgot about Him for the rest of the day. Or, maybe I thought about it later and I invited Him. I said, “Lord, I am struggling in my work. I really need to be aware of Your presence. I need that kind of comfort and support.

So, the examination of consciousness — how aware am I of God in my life? So, balancing things and we put them on the the scales. What does God desire for me? What does He want to bring about in me? Then, an examination of consciousness — I would only know that through being conscious of Him. Not just doing for Him, or praying for Him, but being in Him and trying to live in Him. We put them here as the balancing effect in our lives. So, both of those building

on each other. Pretty important. What kind of space do I give God to really be active and effective and growing in a relationship and an experience with me?

So, I thought the natural one was.....can anybody guess? What would be natural coming out of those two? Not weighing it so heavily on my part, on what I'm gonna do for God. But, rather having a balance between what He desires to do and what I desire to do. And then secondly, the conscience and consciousness. And then naturally, looking at what are we doing already?

Where is the balance in your life, already? And looking at it in terms of, how much am I a human being, and how much am I a human doing?

So, giving you one word for each of them — What is the balance between my prayer and my work? What a difference that will make in my life. The balance between work and prayer. St. Benedict, the great St. Benedict, in founding the community of Benedictines and then ultimately it passed on to just about all the other orders that were formed in the world — the Jesuits, the Franciscans, the Capuchins, and on and on — the St. Benedict Rule. It centered around the fact “laborare est orare” — did you ever hear that one? To work is to pray. That's what it means. For them in the communities, in the monastery, in the monastic community, it worked very well because they were able to put it in such a place that the religious folks did a lot of the praying, and then the lay brothers who were a part of the community did a lot of the labor. There was a great balance. While all of them were expected to do both, it was more heavily weighted for the lay brothers to get out and do the work, that produced the food and kept the monastery functioning. And then many of the others who were religious did a lot of hours in prayer.

How easily that can get out of balance. I meet more people in life, and in the life experience today, who say, “Man, I just find it so hard to pray because it seems like I'm constantly going. It seems like I'm running a taxi service for my kids, and always at their events. I'm having to go to this board meeting and that board meeting. It's really hard to pray. To work is to pray. How important was that experience for Benedict. It's still very important for us. Can you see your work as your prayer? It takes a consciousness of Him, inviting Him to be a part of me and a part of my work. So, it naturally builds on last week's one — How conscience do I choose to be or decide to be about having God in my life? That's the difference maker. It's extremely challenging in today's world for people to do that and to do that effectively.

Sherry Waddell, who is a Mississippi girl. She did not grow up Catholic, but she is a convert to the Catholic Faith. She wrote one of the great books, it's called *Forming Intentional Disciples*. And then following on that, *The Formation of Intentional Disciples*, and then looking at the Catholic Church more than anybody else in the modern world. Looking at — How do we bring forth the gifts that God has given us and make them available, or put them at the service of the church and the community? And she called it the charisms, or sharing the charisms, or gifts. The gifts that God has given us, the gifts of the Holy Spirit. She developed a whole process and whole theology on — discerning those gifts in our lives, and how we might bring them in to focus.

That's a part of what we are talking about in our book these days, *What On Earth Am I Here For?* What are the charisms or gifts that God has given me? How do I utilize them? And how do I make them effective for the community?

Sherry just grew to be a great teacher. She teaches all around the world, today. She lives out in the Northwest, in Colorado. But, she is pretty constantly on the road. She is going to be in our Diocese in October to give a workshop. They consider it a real coup that she would come and do our convocation which would be held in Meridian in October, and do some of the discernment of gifts. A group of, all of our staff, went last year to some of her agents who came and put on a program for discerning those gifts, and how we utilize them.

But I want to share with you something that she said, and a great insight about her experience. She said, "One of these gifts interviews interviewing people about the gifts that they have was remarkable for the fact that it drew the Institute into direct involvement with evangelization." Evangelization means simply sharing faith with other people. "In 2004, a Dominican Father, Father Michael Fonns and I were teaching in a large Canadian city where a pastor had asked us to interview a few of his leaders. I subsequently found myself listening to a woman who was president of the local Catholic Women's Group. But, I wasn't getting anywhere with her. Her stories were so vague that I wasn't hearing any evidence of how God might be using her. Since charisms do not manifest until one's faith becomes personal, I reasoned that if I could tell, or if she could tell me about spiritual turning point in her life, then I would be able to focus on the years since that turning point."

That's pretty important because you might remember what I said to you a few months back — religious people have preferences, missionary people have stories. What Cherry Waddell was looking for was her story. The story of God. How does God affect and impact my life? "And so, I reason that if she could tell me about a spiritual turning point in her life, I would be able to focus on the years since the turning point. And so I asked her a question that I had never asked before — 'Could you briefly describe to me your lived relationship with God to this point in your life?' After thinking carefully for a few moments, she responded briskly, 'I don't have a relationship with God.' Her answer stunned me. My first thoughts were, that's not possible. You're a leader in your parish, You wouldn't do that without some kind of relationship with God. I must be asking the wrong question. And so I spent the rest of the hour approaching the issue of relationship with God from every perspective I could possibly think of. And by the end of the interview, I realized that she had accurately described her spiritual reality in the first place. While God had a relationship with her, or she wouldn't exist. She did not have a conscious relationship with God. No wonder she struggled to discern her charisms. Her parish involvement was devoid of spiritual motivation."

I thought, God that's the saddest thing I've ever read. Yet, it's a truth. I could go to Church every Sunday and still not have a relationship with God. All of these things that we are reflecting here, Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry, Evangelization, they are at the core of that relationship. What is the point if I don't have a relationship? This is why the book and the process is extremely important. She said, "I thought long and hard about that interview. I later told Father Mike, 'That's the most amazing interview I've ever done. Maybe we should ask that question more often.' And so, the two of us started routinely asking, 'Describe your relationship with God.' — that question. We began asking it in the course of our gifts inventory. The answers we received from hundreds of thousands of ordinary Catholics and parish leaders all the world were consistently revealing, and often astounding. We have learned a great deal from the more than 1600 diocesan leaders and parish leaders, and 60 dioceses outside of the United States that we have worked with in making disciples."

What a neat reflection. I could do all of these things and not have a relationship with my Savior. Wow. Would that not be the saddest thing? It would be nice to have a balance between my work and my prayer. And it happens rather easily, very much dependent on last week's reflection. Not an examination of conscience and what I'm doing, or what I'm doing wrong. But, rather an examination of consciousness. What is He doing in my life? What does He desire to do in my life?

It's great to have our confirmation people here, and our seniors who provided the retreat for them. Nice opportunity for you to be reflective of those realities. What is God asking me to do? I know you all have a decision about what you want to do in your life. When you mingle it well with the reality — Hey, what purpose might He have for me? Then, you really know some benefits!

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