

Exodus 20:1-17 or  
20:1-3, 7-8, 12-17

Psalms 19:8, 9, 10, 11

1 Corinthians 1:22-25

John 2:13-25

## Third Sunday of Lent

March 3, 2024



### REFLECTION

Have you ever been to a beautiful place, like a beach or a mountaintop, and just marveled at the beauty of nature? What if, while you were there, you noticed a pile of trash, left there by someone who came before? Their carelessness or disregard marred the beauty of that place. We know that there are also sacred places that are treated in this way. When we see sacred places like churches and landmarks that hold significant meaning misused and abused, it hurts something deep within us.

We can understand why Jesus is so upset in this reading. The temple, his Father's house, is not being treated as a place of grace. It has become a place of transactional faith, where people come, take, and give what is required; it has lost heart. It has become a place of convenience, not conversion. Jesus seeks to change this. He wants to drive out what doesn't belong so that what is sacred can be celebrated again.

This Lent, we can invite Jesus into our hearts to take a close look. He wants to root out all the things that have turned our deepest selves away from loving God and others. We are called to repent so that our hearts, the temple of the Holy Spirit, can be cleansed.

### ? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What areas of your life need to be cleansed?
- ❖ Reflect on how you deal with things that upset you. Bring that to God in prayer.



### ACTION

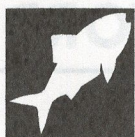
Lent is a time of repentance, of turning away from sin and returning to God. Often it is difficult to be honest about our shortcomings. But we know that God loves us and calls us to be made new in him. During your personal prayer time, do an examination of conscience. Then, if you are able, go receive the sacrament of reconciliation this week.

**"The confession of evil works  
is the first beginning of good  
works."**

—St. Augustine







March 3, 2024

## THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

### LECTIONARY #29B

Exodus 20:1-17 or 20:1-3, 7-8, 12-17

Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 11

1 Corinthians 1:22-25

John 2:13-25

## Prepare for the Word

*The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.*

### Leader's Context

The Gospel describes Jesus' cleansing of the temple. We hear that it takes place in Jerusalem near the feast of Passover. Many Jews from all over would have been traveling there for this solemn event. A key aspect of Jewish worship was the sacrifice of animals as atonement for sins, so it should not be surprising that animals are close to the temple. This must have been a convenience for worshippers so that they could acquire the necessities for the sacrifice. However, Jesus drives out those who sold the animals, and the money changers. His actions show us that the place of prayer had become a place of profit. This was contrary to God's vision for what worship was supposed to be.

**Q FOCUS:** *Jesus' teachings and actions show us how we are supposed to live.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

St. John of God, who we celebrate on March 8, is the patron saint of hospitals, the sick, booksellers, and firefighters, among other things. He was born in Portugal in 1495 to devout Christian parents. He moved away from his faith during his service as a soldier but returned to it after many years. He dedicated the rest of his life to serving God. At first, he tried many extreme acts of piety, but he was then advised that his actions should be motivated by Christ's care for others and should turn his focus outward to helping others. This inspired him to

create a place for the poor who were sick. When he fell ill himself, he appointed a leader for the group of helpers working with him. After John's death, those who supported his work formed the Brothers Hospitallers, which is a religious order still in existence today.

### Church Teaching Connection

"Jesus' behaviour recounted in today's Gospel passage exhorts us to live our life not in search of our own advantage and interests, but *for the glory of God who is love*. We are called to always bear in mind those powerful words of Jesus: 'you shall not make my Father's house a house of trade.' . . . These words help us to reject the danger of also making our soul, which is God's dwelling place, a house of trade, by living in constant search of our personal interests instead of generous and supportive love" (Pope Francis, Angelus Message, March 4, 2018).

## Hear the Word

*Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.*

### Gospel Acclamation

*Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.*

**Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ, king of endless glory.**

### Gospel

John 2:13-25

**Reader:** A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

**All:** Glory to you, O Lord.

*All make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.*

Since the Passover of the Jews was near, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. He found in the temple area those who sold oxen, sheep, and doves, as well as the



money changers seated there. He made a whip out of cords and drove them all out of the temple area, with the sheep and oxen, and spilled the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables, and to those who sold doves he said, "Take these out of here, and stop making my Father's house a marketplace." His disciples recalled the words of Scripture, *Zeal for your house will consume me*. At this the Jews answered and said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and you will raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking about the temple of his body. Therefore, when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they came to believe the Scripture and the word Jesus had spoken.

While he was in Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, many began to believe in his name when they saw the signs he was doing. But Jesus would not trust himself to them because he knew them all, and did not need anyone to testify about human nature. He himself understood it well.

**Reader:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**All:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

*Everyone may be seated.*

## Reflect on the Word

*When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:*

► What is your initial response to Jesus' actions in today's Gospel?

It might seem like Jesus' actions are very out of character for someone who shows God's love and mercy to sinners. Yet when we take a closer look at Jesus' motivations for his actions, we find that they are very much in line with what he came to do. We hear that

his disciples' reaction was to remember the Scripture passage from Psalm 69 that said, "Zeal for your house will consume me." Zeal means passion or energy for a particular cause. In this case, Jesus' cause is his whole life's mission: to help people reestablish a right relationship with God and live out God's commandments. In today's Gospel, he works toward this by getting rid of all those things that are being done in the temple that are not for God but for the profit of human beings.

► While we don't use the term "zeal" in today's language a lot, we should consider the term "righteous anger." What do you think it means?

Righteous anger can be described as the passion and energy that results when we recognize things that are not of God, like sin and forms of evil. It is not an out-of-control anger, but one that inspires us to call for repentance and justice, and to seek remedies for any harm that was done without falling into hatred or revenge.

► What are some things followers of Jesus should be righteously angry about? What can young people do to respond to these things in the way Jesus would?

Another insight from today's reading is that we need to spend time reflecting on our own relationships with God. Are we in right relationship with God? Is there anything within us that needs a spiritual cleansing so that nothing is standing in the way of follow Jesus' teachings? Lent is a great time to allow Christ to drive out that those things that do not belong. Confession is one of the best ways to seek the cleansing our souls need.

► What are some ways you can prepare for the sacrament of reconciliation?

► How can you incorporate reflecting on your relationship with God as part of your regular routine?



## Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 146.

Jesus came to help people return to a right relationship with God.

Our faith calls us to action when we are faced with sin and evil.

Allow Jesus to cleanse your heart and make it pure through the sacrament of reconciliation.

## Act on the Word

### Church Tour

For this activity, you will need paper and pens, enough for each young person.

If possible, try to schedule it at a time when your parish's pastor or another parish leader can offer a guided tour of the space. If this is not possible, allow teens to do a self-guided tour of the church.

Before beginning the tour time, remind the young people that this is a house of prayer, and they should be reverent as they walk around. Pass out paper and pens and encourage them to take notes on things they notice. Instruct them to pay attention to statues, paintings, and stained-glass windows. You might also want to give them a checklist of religious items of interest, like the tabernacle, holy water fonts, the baptismal font, confessionals, or the stations of the cross. Be sure to include special elements unique to your parish. Is there any historical significance to the church? Are there points of interest on your parish campus, like a prayer garden, cemetery, or shrine or grotto?

Give the young people five to ten minutes to explore the church and parish grounds. After the tour, gather back together and allow the teens to ask questions and share some of the things they noticed or learned about the parish.

## Closing Prayer

Son of God,  
you reveal yourself to us in ways that  
we don't always recognize.  
Help us to discover your presence  
in our lives  
and to entrust more of ourselves to you,  
who live and reign with God the Father,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.

## For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at [www.ltp.org/lwgr](http://www.ltp.org/lwgr). Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends. If your parish will be celebrating the second scrutiny with those preparing for baptism at the Easter Vigil, the Year A readings may be used. The handout and session for the Year A readings are found in the appendix of this book on pages 247-250.