



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

Saint Peter's Square
3rd Sunday of Lent, 4 March 2018

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Today's Gospel presents, in John's version, the episode in which Jesus drives the merchants out of the Temple of Jerusalem (cf. 2:13-25). He performs this act with the help of a whip of small cords, overturns the tables and says: "you shall not make my Father's house a house of trade" (v. 16). This decisive action, undertaken in proximity to Passover, makes a great impression on the crowd and sparks the hostility of the religious authorities and of those who feel their economic interests threatened. But how should we interpret it? It certainly was not a violent action, inasmuch as it did not provoke the intervention of the defenders of public order: the police. No! But it was interpreted as *an action typical of prophets*, who often denounced, in the name of God, abuses and excesses. The issue raised was that of authority. In fact the Jews asked Jesus: "What sign have you to show us for doing this?" (v. 18), that is, what authority do you have to do these things? As if to demand that he show he was truly acting in the name of God.

To interpret Jesus' act of purifying the house of God, his disciples made use of a biblical text taken from Psalm 69[68]: "For zeal for thy house has consumed me" (v. 17); the Psalm says this: "For zeal for thy house has consumed be". This Psalm is a call for help in a situation of extreme peril due to the hatred of enemies: the situation that Jesus will experience in his Passion.

Zeal for the Father and for his house will lead him all the way to the Cross: his is the zeal of love

which leads to self-sacrifice, not that false zeal that presumes to serve God through violence. Indeed the “sign” that Jesus will give as proof of his authority will be precisely his death and Resurrection: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (v. 19). The Evangelist notes: “But he spoke of the temple of his body”. With Jesus’ Paschal Mystery begins the *new worship*, in the new temple, the worship of love, and the *new temple* is He himself.

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” (v. 16). It is very harmful when the Church goes astray with this manner of making the house of God 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. This teaching of Jesus is always timely, not only for Church communities, but also for individuals, for civil communities and for society as a whole. Indeed, it is a common temptation to exploit good, sometimes dutiful deeds in order to cultivate private, if not entirely illicit interests. It is a grave danger, especially when one exploits God himself and the worship owed to him, or service to mankind, His image. This is why Jesus used “a harsh approach” that time, in order to shake us from this mortal danger.

May the Virgin Mary support us in the effort to make Lent a good occasion to recognize God as the One Lord of our life, removing all forms of idolatry from our hearts and from our deeds.

After the Angelus:

Dear brothers and sisters, I greet all of you from Rome, from Italy and from other countries, in particular the pilgrims from the dioceses of Granada, Malaga and Cordoba, Spain.

I greet the numerous parish groups, including the faithful from Spinaceto, Milan and Naples, as well as the youth from Azzano Mella and the confirmands from the Diocese of Vicenza, whom I encourage — I encourage! — to witness to the Gospel with joy, especially among their peers.

And I wish everyone a happy Sunday! Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch.
Arrivederci!
