

God in people, not buildings

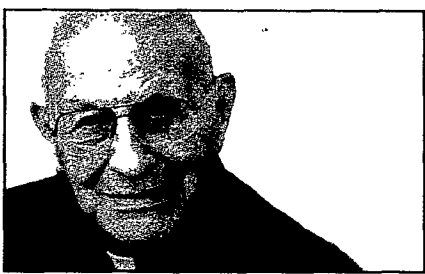
3rd Sunday of Lent (March 23):
(R3) John 2:13-25; (R1) Exodus 20:1-17; (R2) 1 Corinthians 1:22-25.

Jesus was the gentlest, kindest man who ever lived. He stilled violent storms, healed the sick, drove out demons, gave the gift of hearing and the gift of sight to the deaf and the blind, welcomed children. But in next Sunday's Gospel we see a complete about-face: We see Jesus literally throwing people out of the Temple, scattering coins, overturning tables. He even uses a whip to drive sheep and cattle and moneychangers out of the temple court. He shouts: "Get out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a marketplace!" Jesus loses his cool. Why?

First of all, Jesus loved the Temple. He cared so deeply about the holiness of his Father's house that he couldn't help but get angry when he saw what the moneychangers were doing. He went to the Temple for major feasts, and he went to the synagogue every Sabbath. Often he was invited to read from a scroll and comment on it.

The Temple and the local synagogue were central to the identity of his people. Like the Psalmist, Jesus could say, "I rejoiced because they said to me, 'We will go up to the house of the Lord'" (Psalm 122:1). Jesus loved the Temple, loved the synagogue, loved the Jewish faith in which he had been brought up. But when he saw Temple officials taking advantage of people in order to enrich themselves, he was so angry that he felt he had to do something to get the Temple officials' attention.

There are times when it is all right to be angry. All of us get angry at one point or another. Sometimes the worst thing we can do is hold that anger in. Anger in itself is not a problem. It is the tendency to avoid expressing it that seems to bring on



Father Albert Shamon

A word for Sunday

depression. We must be able to go to the person who is making us angry and get the matter resolved, if possible. Of course, it is not always a person who is responsible for our anger. Sometimes it is a situation, like Jesus' anger with the moneychangers in the Temple.

Sometimes anger can be creative and constructive. Many a social ill that has plagued humanity has been eliminated because somebody got angry. Jesus got angry. People had traveled great distances to go to the Temple. The Temple was one place where people should be able to feel closer to God. The sanctuary was a holy place. It was hard, though, to feel God's presence amidst the commotion of cattle, sheep, doves and moneychangers. Something had to be done.

Jesus, filled with creative anger, made a whip of cords and drove out the merchants, and overturned the tables of the moneychangers. It was a chaotic scene. Feathers flying, cattle running through the temple courtyard, coins clattering to the

ground, Jesus shouting, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" He got their attention. Jesus' anger had a purpose. He wanted people to see the purpose of the Temple.

Of course, Jesus' action didn't endear him to the temple officials. So the religious officials asked Jesus, "What sign can you show us authorizing you to do these things?"

Jesus answered, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." As so often in John's Gospel, Jesus' reply is not understood. They think Jesus is speaking of the physical Temple, while he is actually speaking of himself.

Following his death and resurrection, the disciples remembered this incident. They realized that Jesus was speaking of his own death and resurrection. Bury his body and in three days it will be resurrected. You cannot keep his body down. That is also true of his body, the church. When the church is truly the church, great things happen.

A family fled from Kuwait to a camp for refugees in the Middle East. A missionary there saw a woman who had given birth to a baby just three days before. He helped her receive medical attention and get on her feet again. His kindness brought her back to God. She found God in his body, the church.

God cannot be found in a building, but in people who love God and love others for his sake.

Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

Daily Readings

Monday, March 24

1 Kings 5:1-15B

Psalms 42:2-3, 43:3-4

Luke 4:24-30

Tuesday, March 25

Isaiah 7:10-13, 8:10

Psalms 40:7-11

Hebrews 10:4-10

Luke 1:26-38

Wednesday, March 26

Deuteronomy 15:5-9

Psalms 147:12-13, 15, 16, 19

20 Matthew 5:17-19

Thursday, March 27

Jeremiah 7:23-28

Psalms 95:1, 2, 6-9

Luke 11:14-23

Friday, March 28

Hosea 14:2-10

Psalms 81:6C, 11B, 14, 17

Mark 12:28B, 34

Saturday, March 29

Hosea 6:1-6

Psalms 51:3-4, 18, 21B

Luke 18:9-14

Kids' Chronicle

Answers from page 20

1. Genesis; 2. Numbers; 3. Psalms

4. Jonah; 5. Matthew

6. Revelation; Bonus: James

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