

## Journeying Together

### Third Week of Lent: The Clearing of the Temple



*Welcome everyone and allow them time to “arrive” after busy days.*

#### OPENING RESPONSES

Reader: We gather in the name of the Father

**All: Who sees the suffering of the world  
and hears the cry of the poor;  
the Father who yearns that people will come to know his love and justice  
and bring them to birth in the lives of all his children.**

Reader: We gather in the name of the Son

**All: Who saw and named cruelty, injustice and prejudice –  
reaching out to those cast aside by society  
and helping them to know their worth and value as children of God.**

Reader: We gather in the name of the Holy Spirit

**All: Who opens our eyes to see the suffering of our brothers and sisters–  
and our ears to hear those whose lives are blighted by injustice;  
who opens our hearts to the love of God – to know it for ourselves  
and to share it with others.**

Reader: We gather...

**All: *(making the Sign of the Cross)* in the name of the Father  
and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen**

## GOSPEL READING - John 2: 13-25

*Use these or your own words.*

*Please listen as the Gospel is read. It can help to close your eyes—or look at the person reading—or the image on the screen – whichever suits you best.*

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money-changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, *'Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market-place!'*

His disciples remembered that it was written, *'Zeal for your house will consume me.'* The Jews then said to him, *'What sign can you show us for doing this?'* Jesus answered them, *'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'* The Jews then said, *'This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?'* But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

When he was in Jerusalem during the Passover festival, many believed in his name because they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus on his part would not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to testify about anyone; for he himself knew what was in everyone.

## PERSONAL TIME WITH THE GOSPEL

Use these or your own words to take people into a time of personal reflection with the Gospel:

*The "cleansing of the Temple" as this Gospel is sometimes called happens quite early on in John's Gospel. It is as if John is keen to tell us about the importance Jesus places on the Temple and its role in the spiritual life of the people. This is something we might also consider – but what is particularly powerful is just how strong Jesus' reaction is. He becomes very angry – and acts upon it. But it is clear that this is not a mindless rage – or a "hissy fit". Jesus has seen something that is getting in the way of people praying – of helping them to grow as sons and daughters of God. This evokes a deep feeling that this is very wrong and needs to be addressed – and so he acts to make it clear that the Temple is not a marketplace but a place where people can come closer to the God who loves them.*

*Think about the Gospel using these prompts to help your reflection:*

- What is it that makes Jesus so angry?
- Was Jesus' reaction appropriate – or a bit over the top?
- What lesson was he trying to teach the people who witnessed his actions and heard his words?

## GROUP REFLECTION

*In today's Gospel, we see a side of Jesus that we do not often think about. Many of us have an image of Jesus as quite "meek and mild" – which he certainly was. He was also incredibly kind and loving of people who really needed that. But today we are reminded that Jesus was not afraid to name things that were damaging to people – and get his point across forcefully if necessary.*

*Here are some thoughts to help you to reflect together on the Gospel.*

- Do we feel comfortable with a Jesus who can get so angry?
- What is the difference between this kind of anger and a blind rage or vindictive anger?
- Why did it matter so much to Jesus that people could go into the Temple to pray?

*Depending on the size of the group, you might invite people to share any thoughts from their group discussion.*

## LISTENING TOGETHER – OPTION 1

*Here are some thoughts drawn from the Gospel. As you listen or read them, make a note of any that strike you – either because they open up a new idea – or because they challenge you – or... any other reason!*

- Jesus is angry because he sees something that makes life difficult for others.
- Jesus acts to highlight the wrong he sees being done.
- Jesus tunes into a deep feeling of anger and injustice in himself – he does not act in temper or to hurt other people.
- Jesus uses the incident to show God’s desire that people can come and spend time in prayer and worship without having to jump through hoops to do so.
- People are angry with Jesus – but he continues to argue his cause and to help them to see the bigger picture.
- Jesus sees into people’s hearts – and see the deep goodness – or the deep selfishness in there.
- Jesus’ deepest desire is to let people know that God loves them with an unconditional and unending love.

*Give time for people to read through the thoughts and to gather their own reflections. Depending on the size of your group, you might do this as one group or divide people into threes or fours. Invite people to share anything from the Gospel reflection or ‘Listening Together’ thoughts that has struck them using the timers if you have them. Remind people about the confidentiality – about not interrupting but listening deeply – and to treat this as time of grace on Holy Ground. Again use very quiet music in the background if this feels helpful.*

*People might like to share on:*

- What strikes me about how Jesus deals with a deep feeling of anger against something that is not allowing people to live life to the full?
- What does Jesus teach me about the deep feelings I have in my own life – maybe of anger against injustice – or other strong emotion?
- How do we discern between negative or selfish anger (or other deep emotion) and a God-given response to something that needs to be dealt with?

## LISTENING TOGETHER – OPTION 2

*If you are able to get a copy of a series now available on DVD called “Broken”, this offers a really good example of someone becoming angry in a just cause – and how this anger is dealt with. (It is actually a superb series and worth watching in its own right!). **NB – There is very strong language in the first of these scenes.***

*You will need the 6<sup>th</sup> episode and the following scenes:*

- *The young woman’s response to what has happened in her life (Episode 6, 12:40-14:00)*
- *Fr Michael’s homily (Episode 6, 15:00-18:10)*
- *The conversation between Fr Michael and the young woman. (Episode 6, 22:10-22:55)*

*You can set the scene using the following – or your own – words.*

*The series “Broken” is set in the north of England and shows the life of a parish priest and how he accompanies people in all sorts of circumstances. Without wishing to spoil the series, we will use a few extracts which will help us to think about Jesus’ actions and how they might apply today.*

*Our first scene is one in which a young woman responds to something that has happened in her life. Her mother has become addicted to gambling with devastating consequences for her family. The young woman takes matters into her own hands. She is powerless to change things and Fr Michael recognises this and uses it as the basis of his homily.*

*Fr Michael has had several conversations with the young woman's mother but sees that the issue is even greater than what has happened to this family. His parish is in an area with a lot of poverty and he sees how easy it is for his people to fall into the spiral of debt... here is a scene where he speaks out against what he sees.*

*And finally, a conversation between Fr Michael and the young woman which focuses on resolving anger in a different way.*

Invite people to discuss their reactions – using the following prompts if they are helpful.

- How does Fr Michael's anger echo Jesus' anger? Who is it directed at? And who *isn't* it directed at?
- How is his anger different from that of the young woman?
- How might the anger raised by the issue of compulsive gambling – or other social problem – be channelled into making a real difference to people's lives?

## REFLECTION AND ACTION POINT FOR THE WEEK

*Spend a couple of minutes inviting people to share updates on how they got on with their action points last week.*

*In your journal this week, you are invited to look back over your life and reflect on times when you have had a strong reaction to something. Think about times when those feelings seemed to lead you closer to God – when it led you to act in a way that was life-giving to yourself and to others. Think also about times when you felt they led you away from God – to act in ways that were selfish and diminished you or others. Do not judge yourself – that can close down honest reflection. Is there a pattern? What seems to leave you feeling at rights with yourself and with God? What leaves you feeling that you are missing the mark somehow? Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as to what to do with the emotions and what they are leading you to do and to be.*

## CLOSING PRAYER

**All: You have the message of eternal life, O Lord.**

Reader: The law of the Lord is perfect,  
it revives the soul.  
The rule of the lord is to be trusted,  
it gives wisdom to the simple.

**All: You have the message of eternal life, O Lord.**

Reader: The precepts of the Lord are right,  
they gladden the heart.  
The command of the Lord is clear  
it gives light to the eyes.

**All: You have the message of eternal life, O Lord.**

Reader: The fear of the Lord is holy,  
abiding for ever,  
The decrees of the Lord are truth,  
and all of them just.

**All: You have the message of eternal life, O Lord.**

Reader: They are more to be desired than gold,  
than the purest of gold,  
and sweeter are they than honey,  
than honey from the comb.

**All: You have the message of eternal life, O Lord. Amen.**