

Fr James' homily for The Third Sunday of Lent 2021



First Reading: Exodus 20:1-17

Second Reading: First letter of St Paul to the Corinthians 1:22-25

Gospel: John 2:13-25

First, whilst I think of it, notice that the Gospel today is from St John, not St Mark, whose Gospel we are reading most Sundays in this year. Why? Because Mark is a short and concise Gospel, so during Mark's year sometimes the complimentary view of St John is used.

On this holy Lenten Sunday we have the powerful scene of Jesus, angry as he comes to the Temple at the way this holy place is misused, and using this to predict his coming passion and death and resurrection. This is a highly dramatic image, for, of course, Jesus is himself the true Temple, the place where God and his people meet. His arrival there - and St John places this scene early in the course of Jesus' ministry - is very emotional for our Lord, filled with true passion, with desire for us to be one with God.

That is in itself a Lenten homily: God is all about reconciliation and bringing us back to unity with him, whatever the cost will be - and he will pay that cost. So really today I want to encourage all of us (myself included) to go about the business of reconciliation during Lent or Easter. I mean to make a renewed use of sacramental reconciliation. Let's not kid ourselves: we all need to! I am always a bit of a reluctant penitent, because I am lazy, and because I am proud and reluctant to reveal my sins...until I think of this great Gospel scene. It tells us the truth: Jesus could tell what each person had in him or herself. God already knows my sins, so when I take the courage to name them all, God's grace can truly help me. If I leave anything brushed under the carpet...who do I think I am kidding? What we brush under the carpet just gathers dust and dirt. I leave these things in a sense beyond God's grace.

Being reconciled, or being at one with God, was the purpose of the Law of Israel, and it is the great summary of that Law that we hear today in the Ten Commandments. Here is a good analogy: any professional or sportsman always goes back to the fundamentals to hone and practise their skills...a lesson the England cricket team in India could reflect on, perhaps!!! For us the Ten Commandments are a bit like that - fundamentals that cover everything. Many a good Examination of Conscience is absed on them, and the Catechism has a beautiful, extended reflection on them [2083 - 2550](#).

Here in this homily I can only briefly try to illustrate what I mean:

You will have no other God...keep his name holy...keep the Lord's day holy...:
Remember how I talked last week about the basic need to love God first so that we can love all else well? Here it is again in commandments 1,2 and 3. Using God's name should shape us, not the other way round. Love of God should shape our week in a concrete way. Reflect that at present all the obligations of the faith, including Sunday Mass, are suspended. How do we plan to live when the obligation is reimposed on us? We need to long for that anchor.

Respect wisdom and experience, symbolised by Father and Mother. The tradition of our faith knows best, for it is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Don't kill, or steal, or commit adultery, or lie, or be envious: All these commandments follow from the first... Life belongs to God, or else we make ourselves into God. All we are is beloved by God and all we are is to be used in his service, and is not our private possession.

So much to reflect on...but let us take courage. Remember Lent is a joyful and hopeful time in its seriousness. Light is growing and coming. Jesus is filled with zeal and passion to make it possible for us to live in harmony and freedom with God. So let us trust him. Trust him in a concrete way in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Amen.

Fr James and Fr Tom wish you a blessed Sunday. Keep safe and well, and never hesitate to pick up the telephone and be in touch. See you in church I hope! Keep in close contact with the website for news of how practical plans are developing.