

Reflection Questions

- What effect does the presence of untreated addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments have on your relationship with God?
 - What idols have you worshiped in place of Him?

- What is it like for you to deconstruct old patterns and behaviors in order to let God rebuild a new foundation for your life?

3rd Sunday of Lent



God First

“Sooner or later you will have to put God first in your life. God must become the only thing that really matters. It need not be, and better not be, the only thing in your life, but it must be the first thing. When that happens your life becomes simple, richer, and infinitely more worthwhile.”

—Emmett Fox

The effects of untreated addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments in our culture have enormous consequences. Individuals and families are experiencing the darkness of an increased reliance on substances like alcohol, drugs, and food; behavioral addictions such as gambling, acting out sexually, or hoarding items; obsessive thoughts of control, worry, and plotting; compulsive reactions that leave us feeling remorse and shame. We have each felt the impact of these symptoms that come from quenching our thirst for God with things other than God. When taken to the extreme, these become idols and a barrier to finding a personal relationship with Jesus.

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

1st Reading: Exodus 20:1-17

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 11

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:22-25

Gospel: John 2:13-25

We get the opportunity to see a unique side of Jesus that shows his understanding of human nature in this week's Gospel Reading:

*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.*

The zeal of Christ's devotion to his Father, as well as his humanity, is on full display in this scene. We can believe that he feels the same passion toward bringing us into union with God, despising the addictions that separate us and our loved ones from Him while loving us without condition.

Knowing this, our response to Jesus asking us to change our ways and destroy the ungodly temples that we worship may still mirror that of the Jews in this Gospel story. We have spent a long time constructing what we thought would be our path to happiness (and maybe even holiness). We've convinced ourselves and tried to convince others that it was the right way, making sure the visible aspects of our lives seem to be in order.

Lent is a great time to reflect on the practices that are getting in the way of true devotion to our Lord. Are you taking the personal inventory of others, noting what they should be doing differently and directing their resurrection? If so, let the renewal of Christ enter your life through prayer and thanksgiving.

When we surrender our control and attachments to the things of this world to Jesus, he promises to raise them up. The false idols that we get to bring to the foot of the cross during Lent and throughout the year are resurrected in ways we can never predict. Letting go of the expectations we have for our own personal re-build will make cooperation with the Architect far more fruitful.