

CATHOLIC CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCRIPTURES
Archdiocese of Miami - Ministry of Christian Formation



March 15, 2009

3rd Sunday of Lent (Cycle B)

Gospel reading: John 2:13-25

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. Therefore, when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they came to believe the Scripture and the word Jesus had spoken. While he was in Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, many began to believe in his name when they saw the signs he was doing. But Jesus would not trust himself to them because he knew them all, and did not need anyone to testify about human nature. He himself understood it well.
***Herod began the construction of this Temple c.20 b.C. and it was not finished until 60 a.C.**

Brief commentary:

This account appears in all four gospels, but John places it at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. This stands in contrast to the Synoptics (Mark, Matthew and Luke) who put it near the end of his life. John's style includes the use of enigmatic and symbolic statements that were surely not understood at the moment in which the events happened. By the time the gospel was written, the temple had been destroyed by the Romans in 70 a.C. The destruction of the temple was a spiritual disaster for Israel and it surely affected the early Jewish Christians. Their loss was eased by John's theology of the Christ-temple. The temple stood in need of purification and its function would be replaced by the risen body of Christ.

This saying about the destruction of the temple occurs in various forms in Matthew and Mark: "I can destroy the temple of God. . ." "I will destroy this temple made with hands and within three days I will build another not made with hands." This event is symbolic of Jesus' resurrection and the resulting community of the new Covenant.

Today's reading offers three significant messages:

- The text reflects the antagonism between Jews and Christians during the time in which John writes his Gospel (90-100 a.C.) when Christians were not considered a Jewish sect any longer.
- The Gospel invites us to believe not because of the signs we see, but because we have come to accept and understand Jesus and his message.
- Lent is a time to "clean our hearts" of all that is not of God.

For our shared or personal reflection:

After a brief pause for silent reflection share your answers, ideas or feelings.

1. Who are the "merchants" that pollute my temple? Self-centeredness, rash judgment of others, envy, etc.?
2. Lent is a good time for a spring cleaning. What kind of debris is there between my relationship with God and my concern toward others?

Suggested readings: Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 364; 574-576; 583-594.