



1) Opening prayer

God of power and mercy,
protect us from all harm.

Give us freedom of spirit
and health in mind and body
to do your work on earth.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

2) Gospel Reading - John 2,13-22

When the time of the Jewish Passover was near Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and in the Temple he found people selling cattle and sheep and doves, and the money changers sitting there.

Making a whip out of cord, he drove them all out of the Temple, sheep and cattle as well, scattered the money changers' coins, knocked their tables over and said to the dove sellers, 'Take all this out of here and stop using my Father's house as a market.'

Then his disciples remembered the words of scripture: I am eaten up with zeal for your house.

The Jews intervened and said, 'What sign can you show us that you should act like this?' Jesus answered, 'Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'

The Jews replied, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this Temple: are you going to raise it up again in three days?' But he was speaking of the Temple that was his body, and when Jesus rose from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture and what he had said.

3) Reflection

- Context. Our passage contains a clear and unmistakable teaching of Jesus in the Temple. Previously John the Baptist had given witness of Jesus saying that He was the Messiah (1, 29); the first disciples, on the indication of the Baptist, have recognized him as the Lamb of God, a quality of the Messiah: to inaugurate a new Passover and covenant, to bring about the definitive liberation of man (Jn 1, 35-51); in Cana, Jesus works a first sign to show his glory (Jn 2, 1-12): the glory becomes visible, it can be contemplated, therefore, it manifests itself. It is the glory of the Father present in the person of Jesus and which manifests itself at the beginning of his activity, in this way, anticipating his "hour" (17, 1). In what way is his glory manifested? God restores

gratuitously with man a new relationship; he unites him intimately to him giving him the capacity to love like He loves, through the Spirit who purifies the heart of man and makes him son of God. But, it is necessary to recognize the immutable love of God, manifested in Jesus, responding with faith, with a personal adherence.

- Jesus and the Temple. Now Jesus is in Jerusalem, in the Temple fulfilling the prophecy of Malachi (Ml 3, 1-3), he proclaims himself Messiah. Such a presence of Jesus is above all his teaching that produces tension. Now, the reader understands how the great disputes with the Jews always take place in the Temple; in this place Jesus pronounces his substantial denunciations; his task is to lead the people outside the Temple (2, 15; 10, 4). In last instance Jesus was condemned because he represented a danger for the Temple and for the people. Jesus goes to Jerusalem on the occasion of the Passover of the Jews: it is clamorous to manifest himself in public and to reveal to all that he is the Messiah. During that feast Jerusalem is full of pilgrims who have come from all parts and therefore his actions would have had a great effect in the whole of Palestine. When he arrived in Jerusalem he immediately is seen in the Temple where there are a number of people selling cattle, sheep and doves and the money changers sitting there. The encounter in the Temple is not with persons who seek God but dealers of the sacred: the amount paid to be able to open a stand to be able to sell was given to the high priest. Jesus chooses this occasion (the Passover) this place (the Temple) to give a sign. He takes a whip, an instrument which was a symbol of the Messiah who punishes vices and evil practices, and he drives out everybody from the Temple, together with the cattle and sheep. Worthy to be noted is his act against those selling the doves (v. 15). The dove was an animal used for the propitiatory holocausts (Lv 9, 14-17), in the sacrifices of expiation and of purification (Lv 12, 8; 15, 14.29), especially if those who offered it were poor (Lv 5, 7; 14, 22. 30ff). The sellers, those who sold the doves, that is to say, sold reconciliation with God for money.

- The house of my Father. The expression wants to indicate that Jesus in his actions behaves as a Son. He represents the Father in the world. They have transformed the worship of God into a market, a place for trading. The Temple is no longer the place of encounter with God, but a market where the presence of money is in force. Worship has become the pretext to gain more. Jesus attacks the central institution of Israel, the temple: the symbol of the people and of the election. He denounces that the Temple has been deprived of its historical function: to be the sign of the dwelling of God in the midst of his people. The first reaction to Jesus' action comes from the disciples who associate this to Psalm 69, 10: "I am eaten up with zeal for your house". The second reaction comes from the high priests who respond in the name of those selling in the Temple: "What sign can you show us that you should act like this?" (v.18). They have asked him for a sign; he gives them that of his death: "Destroy this Temple and in three days I will raise it up" (v. 19). Jesus is the Temple that assures of the presence of God in the world, the presence of his love; the death on the cross will make of him the only and definite Temple of God. The Temple constructed by the hands of man has fallen into decay; Jesus will be the one to substitute it, because He is now the presence of God in the world; the Father is present in Him.

4) Personal questions

- Have you understood that the sign of love of God for you is no longer the temple but a Person: Jesus crucified?
- Do you not know that this sign is turned to you personally to bring about your definitive liberation?

5) Concluding Prayer

God is both refuge and strength for us,
a help always ready in trouble;
so we shall not be afraid though the earth be in turmoil,
though mountains tumble into the depths of the sea. (Ps 46,1-2)