

Sunday, March 4th, 2018

Third Sunday of Lent

Lectionary: 29

Reading 1: Ex. 20:1-17

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

Reading 2: 1 Cor. 1:22-25

Verse before the Gospel: Jn. 3:16

Gospel: Jn. 2:13-25

I remember one of my teachers during class told us one day, that in the scriptures we will find material to condemn or to save. Depending on what we are looking for, that is what we will find. In the first reading, we hear that the Lord tells us that we should not make any kind of images or idols. This passage is precisely the one taken by other religions to attack Mary, the mother of Jesus, our mother and mother of the Church.

But it is precisely Mary the one who helps us to pray correctly. She is the human model par excellence of what God would like of each one of us. Mary teaches us to adore her Son in an intimate way, in our hearts and minds. That intimate reflection and prayer must be also an external sign. A sign that the people in the Gospel of John were looking for and at the same time they lack.

In the Gospel of John the temple and what should be done in the temple is the central theme. Jesus is uncomfortable seeing people do everything except praying. In that moment the temple no longer makes sense, it has become a supermarket. In our time we may not have experienced this in a direct way, but indirectly in our mind, we come to the temple but we forget the reason why we are here. We stop praying and we think about so many things that prevent us from having that personal conversation with Jesus.

The temple is a sacred place where God the Creator encounters His creation. This is well known to Mary, who takes her son Jesus in her arms to the temple to present him to the Lord, (Luke 2: 22-39).

Honoring many of the Marian apparitions, temples have been erected. A temple where Jesus is worshiped and Mary is venerated, we follow the example of the Jewish tradition that a temple is needed to worship God. Listen to the words our Lady spoke to Saint Juan Diego in 1531, “I will hear their cry, their sorrow, to remedy and to cure all your different sorrows, your miseries, and your pains; I will should you my Son.”

That is why the temple acquires for us a special place of veneration, of prayer and of adoration. It is a sacred place where we must seek by all means a personal encounter with Jesus. Realizing that there are people who are in silent prayer, we need to realize that dressing properly is also a way to contribute to the prayers of others so as not to distract them.

One of my favorite biblical passages comes from the Old Testament from the book of Ecclesiastes chapter 3, “There is a time for everything.” Jesus was upset with the people in the temple area because they were not there to pray. If we follow the advice of the book of Ecclesiastes, we are going to find ourselves being happier every day. If it is time to pray, we are going to pray, if it is time to eat, we are going to eat and not expend our time on the iPhone talking or chatting with someone else, but rather talking with family. We need to be aware of the moment to be happy in this world following the laws of God.