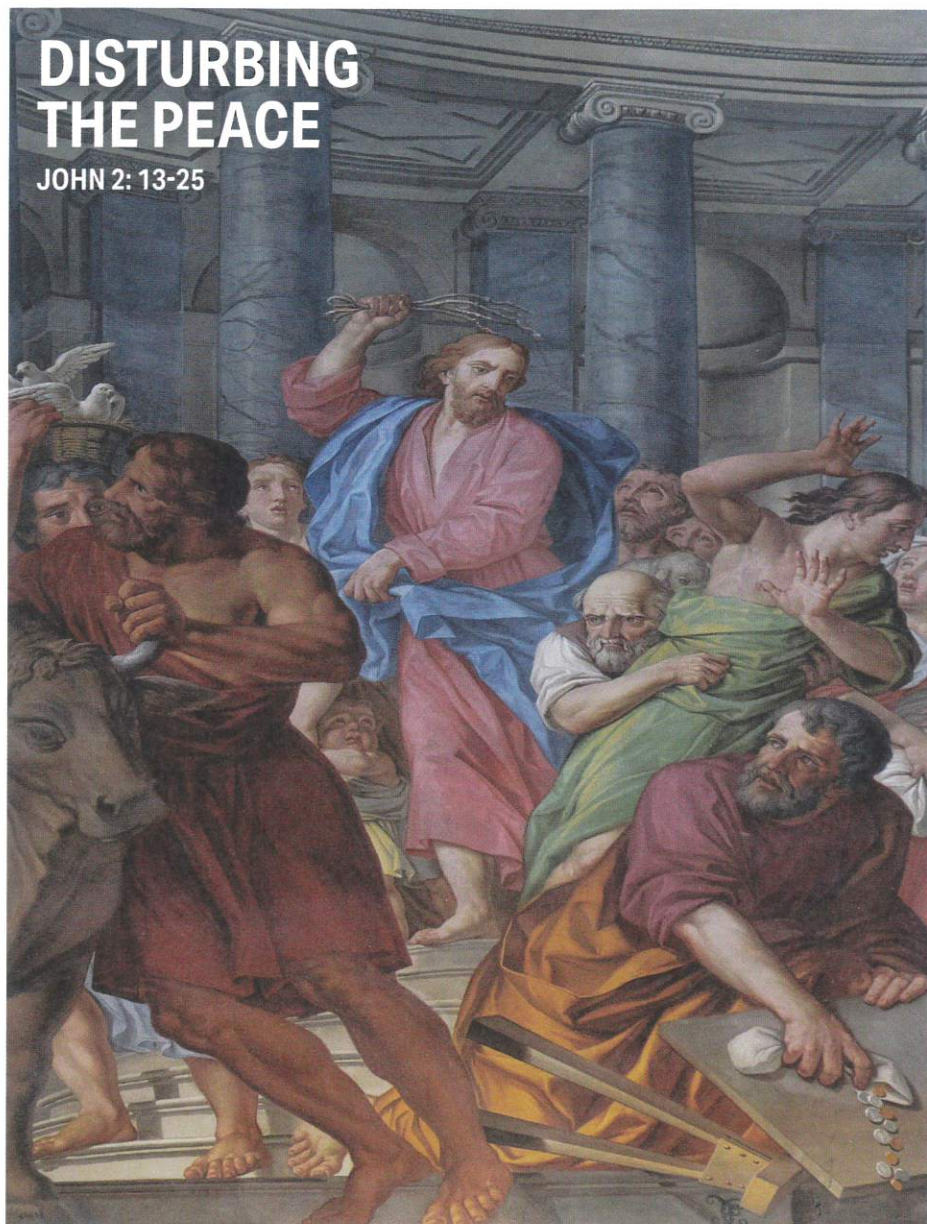


Sunday Message

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

THE WORD

Year B • 3 March 2024 • Psalter Week 3



DISTURBING THE PEACE

JOHN 2: 13-25

REFLECT

In the world of sports, especially team sports, you often hear it said about certain players, "he's a lovely fellow off the pitch, but on it, he's a nightmare." Some players go through a personality change as soon as they put on a jersey and take the field of play. There can be no talking to them, any attempt to reason with them as the game progresses falls flat. Aggression, anger, competitive instinct, the need to conquer the opponent or the desire to win at all costs, usually means the best players become captains and leaders in their respective sports. Aggression is seen as a positive force, to be used for the benefit of the team.

It's often the case that today's Gospel reading has us looking at Jesus in a negative light. We see him bursting through the Temple like a hurricane and have never witnessed him losing control like this before. This doesn't look like the Jesus we have grown to love. But there is nothing negative about what happens here today. His actions are for the advancement of God's kingdom, and no other reason. He's aggressively fighting for his Church. God is not to be pushed to the periphery of the Temple but should remain at the heart of everything we do.

Some would say that the survival of our Church today depends on us, the people of God, taking on the mantle of leader, and using our own positive aggression for the advancement of God's kingdom. ■

The surprising part of today's Gospel reading is witnessing Jesus being openly aggressive with the traders and operators of the Temple.

Huge sums of money exchange hands as official inspectors certify that the animals brought into the Temple are flawless. Temple priests create a system of trade that no owner of animals outside the Temple can compete with. It's no wonder Jesus angrily breaks the law and swings into action. God's house is being desecrated. This whole business is degrading to true religion. Jesus feels deeply the insult to his Father's house. Where there was peace, he brings total disruption. Where there was business as usual, he brings hostility. Jesus moves into the arena of the chief priests to work against the power that devalues his beliefs.

There is no politeness or subtlety about this scene. Jesus makes a whip to drive the traders and cattle out of the temple. Knocking over tables of money and raising his voice, Jesus might be described as aggressive. Certainly, there is an element of anger and impatience driving his actions. The bystanders and friends of Jesus are possibly surprised and taken aback by the change in his personality. If Jesus is worried about being arrested for disturbing the peace, no one could guess that from his behaviour. Jesus is consumed by zeal, by a passion that shows itself in positive aggression. The holy place is then reclaimed for the worship of God, but soon enough as John tells us, the Temple will be replaced by a new sanctuary where people can meet God in the person of the risen Jesus himself. ■

SAY

'May we honour Your presence in our hearts, and offer pure worship, free from all distraction.'

LEARN

The Temple was a sacred place reserved for worship and prayer.

Jesus' actions underscore his authority as Son of God.

Jesus is the new temple, embodying the presence of God among humanity.

DO

Reflect this week on how you might take on a leadership role in your parish community.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

**My eyes are always on the Lord,
for he rescues my feet from the snare.
Turn to me and have mercy on me,
for I am alone and poor.**

COLLECT

O God, author of every mercy and of all goodness, who in fasting, prayer and almsgiving have shown us a remedy for sin, look graciously on this confession of our lowliness, that we, who are bowed down by our conscience, may always be lifted up by your mercy. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Exodus 20:1-17

A reading from the book of Exodus (Shorter form read between > <)

>God spoke all these words. He said, 'I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 'You shall have no gods except me. < 'You shall not make yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything in heaven or on earth beneath or in the waters under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God and I punish the father's fault in the sons, the grandsons, and the great-grandsons of those who hate me; but I show kindness to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

> 'You shall not utter the name of the Lord your God to misuse it, for the Lord will not leave unpunished the man who utters his name to misuse it.

'Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. < For six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath for the Lord your God. You shall do no work that day, neither you nor your son nor your daughter nor your servants, men or women, nor your animals nor the stranger who lives with you. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that these hold, but on the seventh day he rested; that is why the Lord has blessed the sabbath day and made it sacred.

> 'Honour your father and your mother so that you may have a long life in the land that the Lord your God has given to you.

'You shall not kill.

'You shall not commit adultery.

'You shall not steal.

'You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

'You shall not covet your neighbour's house.

You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his servant, man or woman, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is his.' <

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 18(19):8-11

Response:

You, Lord, have the message of eternal life.

- The law of the Lord is perfect, it revives the soul.
The rule of the Lord is to be trusted, it gives wisdom to the simple. (R.)

- The precepts of the Lord are right, they gladden the heart.
The command of the Lord is clear, it gives light to the eyes. (R.)
- The fear of the Lord is holy, abiding for ever.
The decrees of the Lord are truth and all of them just. (R.)
- They are more to be desired than gold, than the purest of gold and sweeter are they than honey, than honey from the comb. (R.)

SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 1:22-25

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians.

While the Jews demand miracles and the Greeks look for wisdom, here are we preaching a crucified Christ; to the Jews an obstacle that they cannot get over, to the pagans madness, but to those who have been called, whether they are Jews or Greeks, a Christ who is the power and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

**Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory!
I am the resurrection and the life, says the Lord,
whoever believes in me will never die.
Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory!**

GOSPEL

John 2:13-25

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

Just before the Jewish Passover Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and in the Temple he found people selling cattle and sheep and pigeons, and the money changers sitting at their counters there. Making a whip out of some cord, he drove them all out of the Temple, cattle and sheep as well, scattered the money changers' coins, knocked their tables over and said to the pigeon-sellers, 'Take all this out of here and stop turning my Father's house into a market.' Then his disciples remembered the words of scripture: Zeal for your house will devour me. The Jews intervened and said, 'What sign can you show us to justify what you have done?' Jesus answered, 'Destroy this sanctuary, and in three days I will raise it up.' The Jews replied, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this sanctuary: are you going to raise it up in three days?' But he was speaking of the sanctuary 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 the words he had said.

During his stay in Jerusalem for the Passover many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he gave, but Jesus knew them all and did not trust himself to them; he never needed evidence about any man; he could tell what a man had in him.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

**I believe in God,
the Father almighty,**

**Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
(all bow during the next two lines)
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.
Amen.**

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Be pleased, O Lord, with these sacrificial offerings, and grant that we who beseech pardon for our own sins, may take care to forgive our neighbour. Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**The sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest for her young:
by your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.
Blessed are they who dwell in your house,
for ever singing your praise.**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

As we receive the pledge of things yet hidden in heaven and are nourished while still on earth with the Bread that comes from on high, we humbly entreat you, O Lord, that what is being brought about in us in mystery may come to true completion. Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE PEOPLE

Direct, O Lord, we pray, the hearts of your faithful, and in your kindness grant your servants this grace: that, abiding in the love of you and their neighbour, they may fulfil the whole of your commands. Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

