

# Sunday, March 8, 2015

## Third Sunday of Lent

### Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

#### Mass Readings:

<u>1st Reading:</u>	Exodus 20:1-17
<u>Responsorial:</u>	Psalm 19:8-11
<u>2nd Reading:</u>	1 Corinthians 1:22-25
<u>Gospel:</u>	John 2:13-25

### Lent, A Time to Allow the Lord to Cleanse Us as His Temple

*Zeal for your house will consume me. (John 2:17)*

If you remember just one thing from today's Gospel, remember this: you are God's temple. Just as Jesus cleared the Temple of all corrupting influences, he wants to cleanse us. Just as he was zealous for his Father's house, he is zealous for each of us—for we are all temples of his Holy Spirit.

But let's put this story in perspective. Remember how encouraging and supportive Jesus is throughout the Gospels. Remember how much he loves you. Remember, also, that he intercedes for you day after day. Jesus is zealous for us in his passionate love, and there are times when his passion is directed against the sin in us. That's where we get the phrase the "wrath of God."

We mar this beautiful temple of our lives when we allow sin to overtake us. Whenever sin rules us in this way, our temple gets a little more darkened, and that upsets the Lord. Of course, his anger is directed against our behavior, not against our hearts. But it is a passionate anger nonetheless.

So let's choose never to cause the Lord to be angry with us. Let's make sure that Jesus is first in our lives. Let's make sure that we do not let any sin enter our lives and defile the temple of our hearts or our bodies. And if we should fall, let's have the courage and the humility to confess our sins and be reconciled with the Lord. In short, let's do everything we can to make the temple of our hearts as pure and holy as possible.

Let's also pray for the courage to evangelize. There are many people in the world who are corrupting their temples. It's up to us to reach out to them, beginning with our families and friends. We can help them to get right with God so that they can experience the passion of his love and not his wrath.

***"Lord, let zeal for your house consume me. Send me into the world with the message of your passionate, all-encompassing love."***

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* ([www.wau.org](http://www.wau.org)) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission.)

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***Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion***

1. In today's first reading we find the story of God's covenant with his people getting clearer and more specific in the now familiar story of the Ten Commandments. Unfortunately, the commandments and laws were so clear and specific that his people began to rely almost solely on their legal observance of these laws for salvation, rather than their faith in God. We can also fall into the danger of relying solely on our own strength to observe God's commandments and Church laws, rather than from the grace and power of the Holy Spirit. How can you make your faithfulness to God and Church teachings be more “in the spirit” rather than just “in the letter” of the law? What steps can you take to increase your reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit as you try to live out each day as a Christian?
2. In the responsorial psalm, the psalmist says that the law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing, trustworthy, right, clear, pure, true, more precious than gold, and sweeter than syrup. What role do you believe that spiritual exercises such as prayer and reading Scripture played in forming such a positive view of God's laws and commandments? How about you? In what ways do regular times of prayer and Scripture reading, and frequent reception of the Sacraments, affect your view of Church laws and teachings? Why is it dangerous to our walk of faith to substitute our own judgments and preferences for God's laws and truths, especially if they are at odds with certain areas of our lives?
3. In the second reading, St. Paul reminds us how easy it is to just seek signs and miracles, rather than trusting in the love and faithfulness of God and his promises to us. Why are signs and miracles insufficient in and of themselves to bring about and sustain a living faith and hope in the Lord?
4. St. Paul also reminds us that for “those who are called, Jews and Greeks alike, [we proclaim] Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God,” but he challenges us with these words: “For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God stronger than human strength.” What do you believe these words mean? What steps can you take to increase your reliance on Jesus Christ and decrease your reliance on just your own strength?
5. In the Gospel reading, the words of Psalm 69:10 are applied to Jesus: “Zeal for your house will consume me.” What can you do, especially during the grace-filled Lenten and Easter seasons, to increase your own zeal for the things of God, and for God's people and his Church?
6. The meditation begins with these words: “If you remember just one thing from today's Gospel, remember this: you are God's temple. Just as Jesus cleared the Temple of all corrupting influences, he wants to cleanse us. Just as he was zealous for his Father's house, he is zealous for each of us—for we are all temples of his Holy Spirit.” What steps can you take during the remaining weeks of Lent to open yourself more to the Lord's love and his desire to purify and cleanse you as a temple of his Holy Spirit? How can you implement the following Scripture from 1 John 1:9? “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”
7. Take some time now to pray and ask the Lord to increase your zeal for him and his Church, and for all God's people. Use the prayer at the end of the meditation as the starting point.

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, a director of partner relations for **The Word Among Us Partners**, (<http://www.waupartners.org/>); a ministry of **The Word Among Us** ([www.wau.org](http://www.wau.org)) to the military, prisoners, women with crisis pregnancies or who have had abortions, and college students. He is also a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Maurice was also the founding Executive Director of the **National Fellowship of Catholic Men**, for which he is currently a Trustee (<http://www.nfcmusa.org/>). He can be contacted at [mblumberg@wau.org](mailto:mblumberg@wau.org) or [mblumberg@aol.com](mailto:mblumberg@aol.com).]

As posted on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal National Service Committee's website: [www.nsc-chariscenter.org](http://www.nsc-chariscenter.org)