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"He was speaking of the temple of his body" (John 2:22).

### **Third Sunday of Lent**

*Exod 20:1-17; 1 Cor 1:22-25; John 2:13-25*

The e. e. cummings poem "I am a little church" conveys the inspiring truth that every human being is a house of worship, a temple of the Holy Spirit, a focus of wonder and grandeur. Cummings celebrates each of us with imagery grounded in nature, its seasons and cycles, in the full experience of human growth from birth to death, in the range of insights and emotions that radiate from the conscious mind and empathetic heart, in the miracles and mysteries of ordinary life, its hopes, fears, joys and sorrows.

i am a little church(no great cathedral)

far from the splendor and squalor of hurrying cities

-i do not worry if briefer days grow briefest,

i am not sorry when sun and rain make April

<https://www.americanpoems.com/poets/eecummings/i-am-a-little-church/>

Saint Thomas Aquinas did not have modern science's knowledge that the human brain has an estimated 86 billion neurons, but he did intuit that human intelligence can encompass the universe, probe its patterns and puzzles and feel the wonder of its immensity and intimacy as an encounter with the Creator, whose image we reflect -- why every person is sacred and worthy of respect and care. Many of the symbols and external structures of religion are only projections of this fundamental truth.

So, it does not shock us that Jesus was indignant when he found God's house crowded with commerce, money changers and animals being sold for sacrifice as sin offerings. In today's Gospel, Jesus overturns business as usual and rebukes management for allowing the temple to become a profit center for spiritual goods and services. "Take these out of here and stop making my Father's house a marketplace."

Yet, it was not for purifying a building that Jesus was accused of attacking religion. When asked for a sign of his authority, Jesus told his critics that his act of purification foreshadowed the holiness of another body, his own, that would be raised up when they destroyed it. As Mary McGlone notes in her Sunday commentary in NCR: "The heart of the scandal Jesus caused that day was not in driving away the money changers but his proclamation that he, a human being, was the new temple."

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/scripture-life/third-sunday-lent-respect-gods-dwelling>

By demanding respect for God's house, Jesus was declaring that humanity was the true temple of God in the world. His Incarnation made all of us children of God. Pope Francis reiterated this same truth yesterday in Iraq when he said that "hatred of others is the greatest blasphemy." <https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/francis-tells-iraqi-faith-leaders-violence-name-religion-greatest-blasphemy>

It was for exposing the nerve the complicity between the high priests, Herod and Rome, who all profited from the temple, that Jesus was ultimately executed. Lent calls us to be worthy of the Incarnation and our baptism as little churches in the world. But we are more than houses of prayer; we must also be peacemakers, defenders of the dignity of every human being. This is the worship God wants, pure and simple.

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