

“Zeal for your house will consume me”

By: Sr. Margaret Flood, OP

The readings for this third Sunday of Lent hold many consoling messages and challenges for us. Lord you have the words of everlasting life. God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might have eternal life.

The first reading from Exodus presents a God who delivers the commandments as a way of following His truth and bestowing mercy on those who love Him. In Paul's letter to the Corinthians it looked as if the Christian message had little chance of success against the background of Jewish or Greek life. Paul placed the message in perspective when he said “What looks like God's foolishness is wiser than human's wisdom and what looks like God's weakness is stronger than human strength. The story of the Cross is foolishness to those who are on the way to destruction, but it is the power of God to those who are on the way to salvation.”

In the Gospel, Jesus clears the temple of selling and trading activities and responds to the request from the Jews for a sign. The temple of Jerusalem in Jesus' day was regarded with a veneration that bordered on fanaticism, for it was considered both the place of Yahweh's living presence among His people and the tangible visible pledge of Israel's triumph over all enemies and indeed over all the world. This profound veneration did not prevent commercialization of a part of the Temple area.

The Jews disregarded the signs of Jesus' many miracles and good works, oblivious to his countless cures of the sick and possessed. In-

stead they demanded from Him a sign that He was sent by God. Jesus answered, “Destroy this temple and in three days and I will raise it up.” This prediction of His death, the destroying of the body of Jesus was followed by His resurrection. The risen Jesus becomes the temple of the new dispensation. Jesus is the replacement of the old Jewish law.

Let us ask the Spirit to expand our vision to see God's creation, our world and the entire cosmos, as a temple and our daily actions as holy. To view the world as God's temple, one constantly is in touch with God. To be present in this sacred space has a prayerful sense of awe. Being aware of living and working in a holy temple is a challenge to treat every person and everything with “great reverence”.

What does that say to the nations at war?
How does it call us to be peacemakers?
How do we deal with terrorism and terrorists?
How are we challenged to live each day?

As we journey through this Lent and ponder the cross and death of Jesus, let us participate anew in the sacrifice offered through Him who suffered the destruction of the temple of His Body only to erect it anew in His Resurrection.

Let us pray

God Grant that zeal for your temple will consume me. May I know the power and wisdom of God in my daily actions, to transform my heart as your dwelling place and the world as your sacred temple. Grant this through your passion, death and resurrection. Amen.

READINGS OF THE WEEK

Exodus 20:1-17 1 Corinthians 1:22-25 John 2:13-25

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靈 修 生 活

清 理 聖 殿

蔡 惠 民 神 父

美國著名牧師葛培理的女兒安妮於「九一一」事件後，被美國某電視台邀請上一早晨節目。主持人單刀直入問：「為何神會讓此等悲劇發生？」她以神的睿智，道出一番見解：我相信神跟我們一樣，為此事極度痛心。當初是我們自己叫神離開，為甚麼現在又要問祂到底在哪裡？不如讓我們回顧美國這幾年的道德發展好嗎？某年，有人提出，學校內不可祈禱，因為學校應宗教中立，學校無權要求學生祈禱。某月，有人覺得教導人「不可殺人，不可偷盜，要愛鄰舍」的聖經落伍，不如把它從學校中拿走。某日，有人說：「孩子有人權，他們有權接受墮胎手術，更沒有責任通知父母。」又有人說：「工作跟私人生活應分開，只要那總統能搞好經濟，我們幹嗎要管人家的私生活？人人都有私隱嘛！」……若細心思索，不難發現這一切是人們離開神，又質問神為何整個世界正走向地獄的門口。

「我是上主你的天主，是我領你出了埃及地、奴隸之所。除我以外，你不可有別的神。不可為你製造任何偶像……。不可……。也不可……。」(出二十 2-17) 天主十誡一連串的「不可」給人的印象是諸多限制，天主要管我們生活的每一個環節，無論對天、對人、對自己，天主總要我們照祂吩咐的去做。然而，人卻嚮往自由自在、無拘無束、想做就去做的生活，難怪愈來愈多人覺得天主十誡不合時宜，或需要因應環境而重新詮釋。例如，「不可姦淫」，今天的解釋應是：如果不戴安全套，便不可姦淫；「不可殺人」的希伯來原文是「不可蓄意謀殺」的意思，意味採取暴力是合理的。諸如此類的講法，目的無非是將十誡的限制，慢慢在我們的生命中消除，使天主囉囉嗦嗦的聲音慢慢遠離我們。

別以為只有美國人才覺得天主十誡生硬，聽不入耳；也不要誤會九一一是天主對人類罪惡的懲罰。其實，自創世以來，人類就希望擺脫天主的限制。他們背離天主，就好像將天主趕出聖殿，使聖殿變成賊窩。大概在公元前六世紀，耶肋米亞先知曾大聲指責以色列人：「你們竟偷盜、兇殺、通姦、發虛誓、向巴耳獻香、跟隨素不相識的外方神祇，……難道這座歸我名下的殿宇，在你們眼中竟成了賊窩了嗎？」(耶七 9-11) 二千多年來，教會與賊窩的區別有時亦只是一線之間。單以「不可殺人」為例，教會曾經不惜為了領土擴張、私人恩怨、種族排斥、宗教不容而發動戰爭，部份更由教宗親自領兵出征，導致死傷無數。

的確，天主十誡有時給人一種難以負荷的感覺，以致人不知不覺間，按自己的喜好和需要，將這些誡命相對化，好使自己的所作所為振振有辭，也使自己的良心輕鬆一點。不過，這些誡命並不是忠告或建議，而是絕對的命令。天主不是說：「不要」殺人，而是「不可」殺人。無論我喜歡或不喜歡，對方是我的朋友或敵人；是清白無辜或是十惡不赦，我都不可以殺人。

天主並不是一個囉嗦的天主，祂不想時刻監視我們。天主也不是一個缺乏自信的天主，祂不需要我們遵守誡命來肯定祂的權威。天主將誡命放在我們心底裡，其實是為幫助我們活出本我。如果我們將工作、名利視為偶像；欺騙他人或財物，蔑視將生命帶給我們的前輩……，我們不單是違背誡命，更將自己逐步推向毀滅的邊緣。因為違背天主的誡命，就是拒絕接受自己有限的事實，否認我們都是受造物的真相。福音之中耶穌清理聖殿，就是提醒我們不要逃避面對自我，不要將天主從我們的生命趕出去。要讓天主在我們的生命中成為天主，要讓我們的生活成為名副其實的聖殿，而不是充滿背叛與偶像的賊窩。

一座建築了四十六年的聖殿，耶穌說只需三天便可重建，意思是祂的死亡和復活，就是新的誡命，就是聖殿所需要的新面貌。保祿深深明白，舊約一切誡命的綱領，就是愛主愛人，就是耶穌一生的寫照。如果惜日以色列人不接受誡命的規限；同樣，今日的人也不欣賞耶穌的死亡與復活。有人認為十字架是絆腳石，也有人認為是愚妄。基督徒又如何呢？我們是否經驗過「天主的愚忘總比人明智，天主的懦弱也總比人堅強」的吊詭呢？

清理聖殿，可說是信仰路上一個不斷的掙扎。雖然我們一時的軟弱，聖殿成了賊窩，不過，因著耶穌的死亡和復活，天主的聖殿永不會被毀。讓我們在四旬期內，再一次藉著耶穌的死亡和復活，得到治療和清理。

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