



Please Give Generously to the  
**Pontifical Good Friday  
Holy Land Collection**



## Third Sunday of Lent: Do You Preach Christ Crucified?

This Sunday's Gospel from John tells the story of Jesus driving the vendors and money-changers out of the Temple. The synoptic Gospels place this event after Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem in the week before his crucifixion, but John places this event very early in His public ministry. During Jesus' time, the temple was the center of Jewish worship, sacrifice and national identity. This was the Second Temple, as the First Temple built by King Solomon was destroyed in 586 B.C. by Babylonian invaders. The Second Temple was built after the nation of Israel returned from their exile in Babylon and was dedicated in 516 B.C. Right before the time of Christ, King Herod added a grand addition to the Temple.

This Temple was holy to all Jews – it was God's house. It no longer housed the Ark of the Covenant, which was lost when the First Temple was destroyed. The Ark of the Covenant had contained the two tablets of the Ten Commandments that were proclaimed in the Old Testament reading this weekend. Jesus knew that the Temple was His Father's house, and He was angered by the graft and thievery that had pervaded the temple worship and sacrifice. When the people questioned his authority to do this, He replied: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (Jn 2:19). Jesus was speaking of the future sacrifice of his own body at His crucifixion – the ultimate sacrifice that reconciled the world back to right relationship with God. But, his audience did not understand that He was talking about Himself – how He would soon become the center of worship and that animal sacrifices to God in the Temple would no longer be needed. St. Paul would proclaim to the Corinthians, "we preach Christ crucified" (1 Cor 1:23) because the sacrificed body of Christ was being transformed into the Body of Christ, the Church.



*Jewish men and women pray at the ruins of the Temple Mount from the time of Christ.*

Many descendants of the earliest Christians, who still preach and profess "Christ crucified," still live in the Holy Land. They live in the shadow of the Second Temple that was destroyed in 70 A.D. by the Romans. All that remains of this Jewish center of worship is the Temple mount, a place still holy to the Jewish and Muslim peoples. But the Christians in the Holy Land know that the focus of their worship is Jesus Christ, a belief that places them in a small minority compared to their Jewish and Muslim neighbors. This can make life difficult for these Christians as they struggle to meet such basic needs as finding jobs, adequate housing and access to health care. Contributing to the Pontifical Good Friday Collection is one way that all of us can help the Christians in the Holy Land meet their basic material and spiritual needs. The monies collected on Good Friday go to the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land who maintain the Holy Sites and multiple apostolates that support the minority Christian population. Please be generous!

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