

## *Spring Cleaning*

Jesus was angry.

I suppose that this is the first thing we might say about Sunday's gospel (John 2:13-25). Honestly, we all get angry at times. Sometimes it is justified. Anger always needs to be channeled appropriately. Often, it can be the "push" that gets us to make changes in our lives.

Sunday's gospel also a story about corruption: *religious corruption*. When pilgrims came to the Temple in Jerusalem, they needed to have their money "converted" to the Temple currency in order to make the appropriate offering.

"Money-changers" were notorious for exacting hefty commissions for their "services." People were being taken advantage of. Often the poor were the most exploited.

The corruption infuriated Jesus.

Corruption is always knocking on the door of religion and of the Church.

But not only the Church. Corruption knocks on the doors of politics and Hollywood, Big Business and law enforcement; even on the doors of higher education and professional

sports. It insidiously seeks entry. And no human community or institution is exempt.

Before all else, corruption *knocks on the door of our hearts*. From there it poisons our relationships and connections.

Sometimes it appears as an unrelenting drive to be the winner, #1, no matter the cost or consequence. It may be a craving to "get" what I want, even when it injures or wounds. It lurks as a twisted sense of entitlement, as if "the rules" don't apply to me. After all, I'm "special," different from the rest...

None of us are strangers to these visitors seeking entry at the doorway of our hearts.

These 40 days of Lenten springtime are an invitation to take a good hard look within. Lent dares us to rethink our motives and re-organize our priorities. How do my attitudes impact my behaviors? Christ calls us clean out the "temple" within.

There is a Florida cleaning company that washes floors and windows, reorganizes closets and cabinets and empties attics and basements of useless junk. Their business motto is: " We clean what's surrounding you so

that you can discover a happier *inside* of you." Sounds good!

But Lent is actually the opposite: *We dare, with God's help to clean and renew the inside of us, so that there can be more integrity and love in the world around us.*

Virtue is an inside job.

As Christ dared to thoroughly cleanse that Jerusalem Temple, may we find the nerve to deep clean the inner sanctuary of our hearts.

***Fr. Steven Labaire***