



MARCH 7, 2021 | 3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT

## HOLY FAMILY PARISH

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## ***Beyond the Decalogue: The Cleansing of Our Temple***

There are rules and regulations guiding every aspect of life whether we know about them or not. Nature itself is governed by principles; for instance, Isaac Newton while studying motion discovered that everything that goes up must come down under the law of gravity. Things actually go wrong when rules and regulations are neglected or flawed.

Rules and regulations are specifically made to maintain and sustain order and discipline wherever and whenever they are applied. Taking an instance from the game of soccer, we know that there are rules and regulations for those who are participating in the game. Insofar as a player does not infringe on any of the rules, the referee will not penalize the individual. Only violators are penalized. It is also important to note that obeying the rules of a game like soccer does not automatically grant victory though they are helpful for victory; we shall be coming back to this later.

In the First Reading today (Exodus 20:1-17), God gave the people of Israel rules that are meant to direct their lives and relationship with God and their neighbors. This is traditionally known as the Ten Commandments (the Decalogue). It will be fitting to begin by exploring the basic reason why God gave them the Ten Commandments.

As we have indicated, there are rules of conduct in people's relationships with God and their neighbors. They

are meant to guide people in their daily lives; they are meant to be standards for them to measure if they are doing well or not.

If we look at the Ten Commandments, we cannot see corresponding punishments for the infringement of each and every one of them as was obtainable in most ancient laws like the *Code of Hammurabi* that existed at that time! Why? The answer can be found in our explanation above. The commandments are dependable measuring standards for our lives and relationships in our journey to reach God. They are meant to help us identify the right steps on this journey. They are not meant to remove sin but to reveal sin so that we can avoid it in our journey. St. Paul made this clearer in his letter to the Romans (3:20):

*For "no human being will be justified in his sight" by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.*

From this explanation, it is clear that observing the commandments alone is not enough for our salvation, just like observing the rules of soccer does not guarantee victory in the game. Players must go beyond observing the rules and strive to score goals.

An appeal to our Lord Jesus Christ will help us here. In the Gospel of Matthew (10:17-22) we are told that a rich man came to Jesus Christ and asked what he must do to inherit the kingdom of God (eternal life). Jesus asked him to pay due attention to the commandments and he

confirmed that he had been keeping them since his youth. Our Lord said that he was lacking something and asked him to go and sell all he had and give the money to the poor; but he went away! The rich man in question believed that observing the commandment was enough but our Lord indicated that beyond observing the commandments there is need to carry out some guided positive actions.

From what we have above, keeping the commandment must be accompanied by the performance of good deeds. We are saved not by the law but by our good works in Christ Jesus our Lord. In the Gospel of Matthew (25:35-40) our Lord Jesus Christ presented the formula for entering into heaven—he was making reference to good works beyond the observance of the law. One can keep all the commandments and still remain unacceptable to God if the person fails to match the commandments with works that are good and pleasing to God.

In the Gospel Reading today (John 2:13-25), we are presented with a clearer picture about the need for cleansing beyond observance of the law. Our Lord Jesus Christ was seen at one of his most radical moments. He entered the temple in Jerusalem and saw those who were buying and selling animals and he drove them all away with a whip and went further to overturn the tables of the money changers.

We need to understand these events. The temple in Jerusalem was usually a beehive of various religious ceremonies. People came at various times to offer sacrifices prescribed by the law. People bought the animals for sacrifices they intend to make from sellers around the temple. They obtained the temple money from the money changers in exchange for the one with the impression of Caesar which was not used in temple ceremonies. From the picture we have here, they were doing the recommended things. It is easier to say that our Lord Jesus Christ drove them away because they were conducting business but that does not say it all.

A deeper insight into the event would show that our Lord went there to cleanse the temple and to convey the message that it is not all about observing the religious recommendations but also by spiritual performance. We might be observing the law while at the same time having a lot of things going on inside of us. It is not all about external religious ceremonies but more about internal sanctity. Our Lord was more concerned about those conducting business inside the temple and not those outside.

The temple represents us. St. Paul (1 Cor. 3:16-17) made us to know that we are the temple of God that should not be tampered with—it is God's dwelling place. When Jesus was driving out the merchants and their merchandise from the temple he was simply demonstrating that our lives need to be cleansed by good works and prayers and not just by observing the rituals of the law: offering the external sacrifices that are recommended without living the inner

life that is commendable. There are indeed many things that are robbing us of God's graces in our external religious observances that lack internal spirituality.

It will be fitting to examine closely what our Lord actually did when he came into the temple. First, he was not pleased with what the people were doing in the temple. Oftentimes we see and even encounter attitudes and dispositions that are contrary to the good news and we choose to keep mute and allow them to thrive. It is absolutely wrong not to speak out against sin and disobedience.

Our Lord demonstrated his anger by using a whip to drive both the merchants and their merchandise away. He identified something wrong and took a practical step to stamp it out. He went further to say that the temple should be a place of prayer but they have turned it into a den of robbers. Our lord not only identified a problem and acted, he also prescribed what should be done. Often we end up criticizing a person or situation without providing a remedy or solution as needed.

Our Lord Jesus Christ remains the central point of our Christian life. In him is the fulfilment of the law and the prophets (Matt. 5:17). This is actually the point St. Paul was emphasizing in the Second Reading (1 Cor.1:22-25) when he maintained that Christ crucified is the greatest treasure and central object of the good news which for many is a stumbling block and to others folly. However it is for those who are called power of God and wisdom of God.

If the commandments were sufficient for our salvation, God would

(Over)

## PASTOR

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eanokye@richmonddiocese.org  
(276) 385-7312

## OFFICE MANAGER/

## BOOKKEEPER

Lydia St. Peter

## OFFICE HOURS

Mon–Fri 9:30AM – 2:30PM

Please call the parish office to make arrangements for the **Sacraments of Baptism, Anointing of the Sick or Holy Matrimony** as well as funerals. **Reconciliation** is available from 30 minutes before a scheduled Mass.

## MASS TIMES

### SATURDAY

4PM – St. Joseph's

6PM – St. Mary's

### SUNDAY

9AM – St. Elizabeth's

11:30AM – St. Theresa's

### MON | WED | FRI

10AM – St. Theresa's

Cover image:

*Jesus Cleansing the Temple* by  
Carl Bloch, 1874

not have taken the extra step of sending His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, into the world. In fact, the commandments are better understood and expressed in the life and teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ. On one occasion, a lawyer came to Jesus Christ and asked him which is the greatest of the commandments. Answering, our Lord said: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind and your neighbor as yourself. He even concluded by saying that all the Law and Prophets hang on these two.

Another significant thing our Lord did that should not be taken for granted was the overturning of the table of the money changers. When a table is overturned one sure thing that will happen is that the things on it will be poured away and it will become empty. This season is actually the proper time to overturn the tables of our lives, to pour away all those things that are irrelevant. It is a time of self-emptying which our Lord Jesus Christ himself did in order to save us. St. Paul did mention that he (Jesus Christ) emptied himself taking the form of a slave though he was God (Phil. 2:6-11).

The commandments will become very efficient if they make us to overturn the tables of our lives and empty ourselves of unnecessary things. It is at this point that inner cleansing is inaugurated. The sixth commandment which, for instance, states that we should not commit adultery should help us to overturn all the things (actions and words) that dispose us to impurity—not just that very act. The same applies to all the others. (It is important to note that none of them are higher or lesser than others; they all have the same weight and measure).

As we march into the third week of Lent, let us be attentive to the Ten Commandments. We should focus on them not as ends but as guides that will enable us to perform more credible and creditable actions that will eventually lead us to eternal life, which is the end goal.

Do have a very resounding Sunday and a blessed week ahead.

## *The True Nature of Worship*

**DEACON LAWRENCE KLIMECKI**

What gods do we truly worship?

What would we give up everything for? Wealth? Fame? Possessions?

What would we not give up regardless of what is offered to us? Prestige? Pleasure? Position?

When we answer these questions we discover the most important thing in our lives. Whatever answer we give, that is our god.

It has been said that the devil doesn't care who or what man worships as long as it is not God. And the devil works very hard at exploiting our weaknesses.

We are coming dangerously close to eliminating God from our everyday lives.

### *Scratching the Surface*

Donald Barnhouse was the pastor of the Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia from 1927 until his death in 1960. One evening he was counseling a young woman outside the church after services. She said she was a Christian and wanted to follow Christ but she also wanted to be a famous actress. She wanted a stage career in New York, and she told the pastor that as soon as she had "made it," she would follow Christ completely.

Pastor Barnhouse fished around in his pocket for a key. He took the key over to a nearby mailbox and made a scratch in the painted surface.

"That is what God will let you do," said the pastor. "He will let you scratch the surface of success. He will let you get close enough to the top to know what it is, but He will never let you have it, because He will never let one of His children have anything other than Himself."

Years later he met the young woman again and she confessed that this indeed had been the pattern of her life. She had made it onto the stage, she even had her picture in a national magazine, but she had never quite achieved the success and fame she longed for. "I can't tell you how many times in my discouragement I have closed my eyes and seen you scratching that mailbox with your key. God let me scratch the edges, but He gave me nothing in place of himself."

## What Do We Worship?

There are many crises that face the Church today, but perhaps the crisis that informs all the others is a crisis of faith. We have lost the sense of the sacred. The secularization of the world denies that anything is truly sacred, truly holy. And so our popular culture is littered with twisted representations of the transcendent Truth.

The holy angels have become fodder for our entertainment. No longer are they messengers who convey to us the Truth. Instead we have an endless parade of the angels presented to us with human failings. They have been characterized as lazy drunkards, violent revolutionaries, and enemies of the human race.

Sacred scripture has been used as a weapon against those with whom we disagree. The poor catechesis of the 60's and 70's has resulted in a generation that is content to take a biblical verse out of context in order to make a point without any knowledge or concern over what the passage actually means.

To misuse, profane, or desecrate holy things is called Sacrilege. To speak against God or His teachings is blasphemy. Like heresy, although we no longer commonly use the words, sacrilege and blasphemy are so common we do not even recognize them.

In Robert Bolt's play, "A Man For All Seasons" there is a scene in which Thomas More and Eustace Chapuys, the Imperial ambassador, are debating More's views on the king's "great matter." Chapuys begins to quote the Holy Gospel according to Mark, but More interrupts him, "Stop," he says "Holy writ is holy, excellency." More does not believe the Word of God should be used as an aid in a debate. Do we truly believe that sacred scripture is sacred? How do we treat the books that contain these words? Do we treat them as just another book on our shelves or do we hold them in special regard containing as they do the inspired Word of God?

Do we bend the knee at the sacred name of Jesus, as St. Paul advises, even if it is with a nod of the head, bending the knees of the heart as it were? When we recite the Creed do we bow at the words "and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man," as

we are instructed to do?

Following a popular saying, how we pray, what we believe, and how we live, are all connected. There was a time when we would make the sign of the cross when passing in front of the tabernacle, passing a church or even a crucifix. When we pray we would bow at the mention of the most Holy Trinity. There was a time when it would be unthinkable to begin a meal without thanking God for His manifold gifts.

All of these small gestures are outward examples of our inward belief. They help to remind us of what is truly important. They make the day sacred by recalling God to our hearts and minds throughout the day. When we abandon these small traditions, these small prayers, can we still say we truly live our faith?

## The Nature of Worship

In the middle of Lent, God calls us to meditate on the true nature of worship.

God reveals Himself in the giving of the 10 commandments. He introduces Himself as the sole God and any form of idol worship is therefore worthy of punishment. All worship is reserved to Him alone. Moses receives the laws under which the people must live in order to maintain a covenant relationship with God. God is making His people a part of His family and that means they must devote themselves entirely to Him. This includes one day a week that is held back from man and given solely to God.

We can understand, then, the zeal showed by Jesus as he cleansed the temple from that which was unclean. Until the death and resurrection of the Messiah, the temple must be reserved solely and exclusively for prayer. Jesus' cleansing of the temple foreshadows the new covenant. No longer will men sacrifice sheep and oxen in a house of stone and wood. The new temple is Christ Himself. Worship demands sacrifice and the sacrifice He demands will be the sacrifice of our hearts and minds.

Do our actions show our willingness to make such a sacrifice?

*mass intentions*

**Date Intention**

**3/6 SATURDAY**

4PM

6PM

**3/7 SUNDAY**

9AM Dee Gentile

11:30AM Michael & Bridget Rynne †

*council members*

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Tonya Hylton, Frannie Minton, Ralph Shawver, Cindy Deskins, Barbara Jones, Donna Lambert

**FINANCE COUNCIL:**

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*please pray for*

Louise Serreno\*  
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 Billy Akers  
 Scotty McBride  
 Gerry Hankins  
 Eric Pellerin  
 Clarence Moore  
 Lexi Cox  
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*stewardship of treasure*

**OUTSIDE DONATIONS—THANK YOU!**

St. Michael, Glen Allen, VA: \$2,005

A St. Michael parishioner: \$5,000 *Holy Cow!*

St. Mary's Backpack Program: \$133

Donations Received as of February 28 (Week 35)		
CHURCH	ATTENDANCE	RECEIVED
St. Joseph's	9	\$246
St. Elizabeth's	18	\$775
St. Mary's	10	\$60
St. Theresa's	22	\$1,306
Total Offertory	59	\$2,387
Outside Donations		\$7,005
Year to Date Received		\$82,437
Goal		\$77,404
Ahead/Behind Goal		+\$5,033

## HOLY FAMILY NEWS

Mass continues to be livestreamed Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 10AM from St. Theresa's and the church will be open for anyone who wishes to attend in person. Masks are mandatory! The 11:30AM Sunday Mass at St. Theresa's will also continue to be livestreamed for those who are not yet able to join us in person.

Every Wednesday evening at 7PM, Fr. Eric leads us in a study of Sacred Scripture. We are currently studying the Gospel of Matthew. Why not start a new relationship with the Word! Come in person or join us on Facebook. Questions and comments always welcome!

**Join us every Friday in Lent at St. Theresa's at 10AM** for Exposition and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the Divine Mercy chaplet, and Stations of the Cross. Daily Mass will begin at 11AM following Benediction.

Have you checked out Fr. Eric's "**Cast into the Deep**" column on our Facebook page? Fr. Eric carefully crafts a reflection every day on the readings. Use it daily and grow your faith!

[facebook.com/holyfamilyswva](https://facebook.com/holyfamilyswva)

## ANNUAL DIOCESAN APPEAL

There are a lot of distractions in our lives; kids, sports, school, meetings, ministries, social media, cell phones, work, family, errands, driving, home repairs, shopping, and more! Where is God in all that? Do you take time to find Him?

We're almost halfway through Lent. How is it going for you? Have you had to do a restart? Lots of us have. Take a moment to examine and assess the distractions in your life. What are the things you need to "take a whip to and drive from the temple"?

**If you haven't already, please make the Annual Diocesan Appeal part of your Lenten almsgiving.**

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birthdays & anniversaries:

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## MARCH

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**BIRTHDAYS—8:** Margaret Shawver, Pauline Carpio

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