

Lent 3B

A man had a dream. He was wandering around in heaven when Jesus came along and let him have a vision of something happening down here on earth. It was a church on a Sunday morning and Mass was being celebrated. The organist was playing away, but he couldn't hear a sound. He could see the congregation singing but again, silence. He watched the priest say the prayers - but, once again, there was no sound. He was puzzled, so he turned to Jesus and asked him why the silence. Jesus replied, 'Well you see, unless people are sincere in their worship, we cannot hear them up here'.

In the temple precinct which was considered to be holy ground defrauding pilgrims by dishonest currency exchanges were going on and even tolerated. Jesus was aware of all these abuses and that is why he was livid. In a fit of righteous anger he cleared the temple of these rogue traders. They will have been doing this for years without anyone challenging them. How could they genuinely worship God inside the temple if they were swindling people in the Temple grounds?

Is there is a contradiction between our worship of God on Sunday and what we do on Monday. I half remember an old rhyme which went something like this:

*Mr A, he went to Mass
He never missed a Sunday
But Mr A he went to Hell
For what he did on Monday.*

And it is often good to remind ourselves that at the Last Judgement whether we stand at Christ's left or right side will be determined on whether 'we put flesh on the bones of our church-going or not'.

The traders in the temple grounds had their hearts set on Mammon (money) – the worship of God took a back seat. Even

the war in the Middle East is about money. Political leaders can be beholden to powerful financial backers who will influence their thinking even to legitimising an unjust war. As the wise man says, when money talks the truth is silent'. In Gaza this political lobbying is taking precedence over the lives of little children. Jesus put his life on the line by challenging people like that. In the gospel today he saw red and set about clearing the temple precincts much to the ire of the temple priests. They were in on the scam as well. They would lose a lot of money if their corrupt but lucrative trade in the temple grounds went under. Jesus would have to be dealt with.

Another way that my worship of God may be compromised is when I treat the house of God as a 'kind of Sunday bazaar'. Isn't that what Jesus said: 'stop turning my Father's house into a market'. There are not many places these days free of noise or din even in places of worship. Prayerful people tell us that God can only be encountered in the stillness and if we can't find it even in our churches then our worship of God will leave a lot to be desired.

So today we ask the good Lord to clear out from our spiritual temple all those things which makes our worship of Him less than genuine. Only then, will there be a resonance between how we worship here on Earth and how it is received on high.