

The Word of God This Week

Set time aside each day this week with other members of your household, with other members of your parish or alone to listen to and reflect on the living Word of God. Use these passages from the Lectionary that are assigned for Liturgy this week. Reflect on how the Lord is inviting you to a deeper union with him.

TODAY

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

MONDAY

Luke 4:24–30

“... no prophet is accepted in the prophet’s hometown.”

TUESDAY

Matthew 18:21–35

“... forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

WEDNESDAY

Matthew 5:17–19

“I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.”

THURSDAY

Luke 11:14–23

“... the kingdom of God has come to you.”

FRIDAY

Mark 12:28–34

“You shall love your neighbor...”

SATURDAY

Luke 18:9–14

“... all who exalt themselves will be humbled...”

The Anger of Jesus

Today’s narrative appears in all four Gospels, but John places his account at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. This is in contrast to Mark, Matthew, and Luke, who placed it near the end of Jesus’ life on earth.

John’s portrayal of the cleansing of the temple reinforced the theme of Jesus as the expected Messiah and the Son of God. John also used this event to show how early on Jesus referred to his coming Resurrection, even though it was not understood at the time.

Although we commonly think of Jesus as a gentle, peace-loving man—children and sick people were comfortable approaching him—on occasion, Jesus displayed strong righteous indignation, or holy anger.

Jesus was angered by those who sold animals for sacrifice and money changers who exchanged money from foreign lands into the proper coinage for the temple tax. He thought they turned the

temple, a holy place, into a marketplace. Instead of a house of prayer and worship, it was a store.

After driving the exploiters out of the temple, the Jews wanted Jesus to give them a sign, or a display of miracles, to prove that he had the authority to act as he had. When Jesus provided an answer regarding the temple, he was misunderstood.

The temple to which Jesus referred was not the physical building, but the temple of the body. While the actual temple stood in need of purification, its function would be replaced by the risen body of Christ, resulting in the new Covenant.



The Faith of the Church

The cleansing of the temple indicates the replacement of the building by the person of Jesus, the living Temple of God. A description of the destruction of the temple is written in various forms, John uses, “I will destroy this temple made with hands and within three days I will build another not made with hands.” Here it is symbolic of Jesus’ resurrection and the resulting future Christian community (Cf. *New American Bible* 1991).



Questions of the Week

What a shock it must have been for the Jews in Jesus’ time to hear him say that the Temple in Jerusalem would be destroyed, and he would rebuild it in three days. How could they possibly know that he was referring to his own body?

Adults

As a Catholic today, what does this event in the Temple teach me about the Resurrection?

Children

Why do I think Jesus was so angry when he arrived at the Temple in Jerusalem? Was he right to get so mad?

Responding to God's Word . . .

I cannot imagine what my feelings would have been if I had arrived at the Temple and found the buyers and the sellers doing business and exploiting those coming in for Passover. Like Jesus, I would have been angered at the manner in which some made money and took advantage of others in the name of religion.

Obviously, Jesus was troubled when he saw people turning the Temple into a social club or an average marketplace.

Jesus reminded the disciples that God's house was meant to be a house of prayer. It was his zeal for God's

house that moved him to action.

If we have a zeal for the Lord's house, we will not rest silently when others pervert its intended purpose. Or might we be guilty of a similar offense ourselves?

I wonder if we sometimes attend church more as a form of "networking," to make contacts with friends and colleagues, or even to make social plans for the coming week.

God demands holiness from us. We must take care not to be irreverent when it comes to being at church and the times meant for worship.

SUGGESTIONS

Use one of these suggestions or one of your own to respond to God's Word this week.

In the home. Discuss with your family things that happen in the Church today that upset you and offer possible solutions.

In the workplace or in school. If any of your classmates or coworkers makes fun of your faith or religion, stand tall and don't allow this disrespect.

In the community. Try to organize a seminar in your area where several people representing different religions can talk and answer questions from the public.



Meditation Moment

A 1980s study showed that an average of 600 Catholics per parish were inactive in their faith. It also showed that most Catholics who return after being inactive did so because someone invited them back. Lastly, the study showed that the best recruiters of inactive Church members were those who had once been inactive themselves. In other words, they were people like the woman at the well in Samaria.

For reflection . . .

Who is one person I know to be inactive and whom I might invite back to church? How?

IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED,
YOU ARE RUNNING ABOUT AVERAGE.

M. H. ALDERSON

FROM *MISSION* BY MARK LINK, SJ

Saint Francis of Assisi's Prayer Before the Crucifix

Most High,
glorious God,
enlighten the darkness
of my heart
and give me true faith,
certain hope, and perfect charity,
sense and knowledge,
so that I may carry out your
holy and true command.
Amen.

Carry this thought in your heart as a guide for your faith journey this week.

Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible.

St. Francis of Assisi

Profile in Faith

Saint Francis of Assisi

In Greccio, Italy, Saint Francis of Assisi created the first Christmas crib in the year 1223. Word went out to the people of the town; they came carrying torches and candles. For Francis, the simple celebration was meant to recall a savior who chose to become poor for our sake.

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