

On this 3rd Sunday of Lent, St. John gives us in his Gospel the other side of Jesus, namely anger. We're used to reading the accounts of smiling Jesus, gentle Jesus, doing his compassionate pastoral ministry. No display of his anger, right? Many of us are taught that anger is bad, sinful, unrighteous, etc. But we know that anger is neither bad/sinful nor good/righteous, except how one uses it. The Fourth Gospel (John's Gospel) places the story of Jesus' cleansing of the Temple in Jerusalem at the beginning of his earthly ministry rather than as the cause of official hostility against Jesus during his passion as you find in the gospels of Mark and Mathew.

St. John tells us Jesus entered the Jerusalem Temple during the Passover where he found those who sold oxen, sheep, and doves, as well as money changers. Jesus made a whip out of cords and drove them all out of the temple area and reminded them to stop making his Father's house a marketplace. This display of anger by Jesus is what I refer to as "Righteous/Good" Anger because the Scribes and Pharisees turned the house of prayer into a money-making marketplace. Jesus reminds them of God's intention that the Temple must be a house of prayer, not a marketplace for all nations, and must not be restricted to Jews only. By his action, Jesus replaced sacrificial worship with a spiritual worship. Here, one may realize that Jesus was very assertive, not aggressive, in addressing the sanctity of the Temple as a house of prayer for all nations.

Reflecting on your anger, how would you describe your anger? I'm truly concerned about folks who claim they don't get angry. Sorry to say, the only folks I know who don't get angry are the dead. They are resting peacefully with the Lord. Anger is one of the human emotions that we are blessed with if it is used well. So the question I pose is what is it that makes you angry? Is your anger good or bad? Remember, no one makes you angry! You may disagree with me, but this is an evidence-based fact, please! You may choose to be angry or not. It is your free choice! Again, anger is a feeling. It is neutral. What makes it good/bad depends on how we use it. Unfortunately, many of the things we see on TV, read in social media, etc. show the consequences of a destructive anger, not a constructed/good anger. It is our collective duty as adults to teach our children that it is okay to get angry without being aggressive. We have to educate them on how to use their anger for a constructive/good cause and not for a destructive cause. In other words, anger should lead to assertiveness and not to aggressive behavior. Beloved, it is okay for us to disagree, but it is not okay to be aggressive. That is a challenge!

In the first reading, we hear of the Ten Commandments or the Decalogue. It is also found in Deuteronomy 5:6-21. The Ten Commandments are a "GPS" of life for us to know how to relate to God and one another and guide us to living a healthy Christian life. If we follow these Ten Commandments well, all will go well with us. But when we think we know better than God who gave us these commandments out of his unconditional love for us, we will not find meaning and purpose in our life. We know this also when we do not follow the Constitution of our country. We should be grateful and proud to be a nation ruled by laws and not by whims of individuals like some nations that we know of. When we think we know better than the founding Fathers who wrote the Constitutions for us, our beloved country begins to experience "crisis."

If you look closely at the Ten Commandments, you will agree with Jesus that, it is all about the love of God and our neighbor. Without loving God with our entire life and loving our neighbors as ourselves, the Ten Commandments are meaningless and so is also our Christian life.

St. Paul in the second reading presents us with two groups, namely the Greeks who want only human wisdom, and the other group, the Jews, who want signs only. These ancient Jewish people who love signs are like those people that want worship to be 'spectacular.' Religion must be exciting; if not, they are not coming. The other group, the Greeks, who want 'wisdom,' are the rationalists. If they can't understand religious worship based on their human

thinking, they want nothing to do with it. St. Paul gave these two groups, and whatever groups you may identify yourself with, his best approach to a true worship of God, namely the Cross, Christ crucified. We must also worship God in spirit and in truth as the Word of God tells us. For us Christians, especially Roman Catholics, the Crucifix must always remind us of the unconditional love God gave us by allowing His only beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to die for our salvation. The Crucifix must always remind us of Christ's triumph over Satan and our redemption for his heavenly Father. I hope and pray that all of us have a Crucifix, not a Cross, in our homes. If possible, we should also have crucifix in our office, etc. Our enemy Satan hates the Crucifix. It reminds Satan of Jesus' defeat of him.

Let us pray that like Jesus Christ, we will always use our anger for the better building of his kingdom here on earth. May our holy Mother Mary and her beloved husband, St. Joseph, continue to intercede for us. Amen!

FIRST FRIDAY, APRIL 5

EXPOSITION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT & BENEDICTION WITH HOLY MASS

Before Jesus' passion and death on the Holy Cross, he took his disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane where he prayed with them. During one of his visits with them in the garden, Jesus found them sleeping and said to Peter, "SIMON, ARE YOU ASLEEP? COULD YOU NOT KEEP AWAKE ONE HOUR?" – (Mark 14:37; Lk 22:45-46, & Mt 26:40)

Fellow Catholics, are you willing and ready to spend ONE HOUR WITH JESUS CHRIST IN THE MONSTRANCE?

On every First Friday of each month, you have the privilege to spend One Hour with our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 am to 6:45pm: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in the Church

6:45 pm to 7pm: Benediction

7 pm: Celebration of the Holy Mass

Kindly sign up for the time you would like to be there with our Lord Jesus Christ. A sheet will be on the table in Marist Hall. We need at least one person or more at all times, but you may come at any time. In case you signed up and can't make it, kindly call or send me a text message on my cell phone 609-510-1090. We can't leave our Lord alone in the Church.

If you have any questions/clarifications with regard to the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament & Benediction with Mass, please reach out to me.

Thanks and God's blessing to you all,

Fr. Ed Tetteh, SVD