

## HOMILY – 3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT “B” 3-4-18

Aristotle, the great philosopher, once said: ***“It is easy to become angry. Anyone can do it. But to become angry at the right moment, to the right degree, for the right purpose, in the right manner, that is difficult. Only the wise person can accomplish it.”***

There are many images of Jesus in religious art. He is portrayed as the loving and forgiving father embracing his prodigal son. He is often seen as a kind and compassionate man reaching out to embrace the children. He is sometimes pictured holding in his arms a fleecy white lamb.

Today’s Gospel gives us a very different image of Jesus. He takes a whip of cords and drives out the money changers from the temple area. All around him is confusion. Merchants are holding up their arms to protect themselves. Tables are turned over. Animals are running away. Coins are spilled all over the place. Bystanders are dashing for cover. Above all the chaos and excitement, Jesus’ voice could be heard loud and clear: **“Take these out of here, and stop making my Father’s house a marketplace!”**

A pilgrimage to the Temple was supposed to be a sacred experience. But that was destroyed by the atmosphere of the Temple where all the buying, selling and currency exchange got out of hand. At the Passover, the Temple became a shopping mall. Merchants were selling animals for the sacrifice; money changers were there trading currency at predictable exorbitant rates of exchange. Some suggest that Jesus’ anger was induced by the greed and the unfair way the poor were being taken advantage of by unfair practices. Others suggest that Jesus’ cleansing of the Temple was a prophecy of the cleansing He would bring to the human race by his death and resurrection. It would be fair to say Jesus’ anger was motivated by what he believed was wrong.

As Christians we are also required to act on behalf of what is right, to oppose every evil, oppression, injustice and discrimination. We do these things because we believe that they are contrary to God’s kingdom. We call this action against evil, constructive anger. This kind of anger can be a virtue when it is exercised on behalf of the kingdom.

Ask yourself this question, have you never been angry? If you say yes, that is not necessarily a good thing. Never being angry does not make us holy; in fact, it could mean we are indifferent, indifferent to the injustice, violence and evil that are part of our world. On the other extreme if we realize we are always angry, that is not good either. When we suddenly burst into rage at the slightest comment, when we explode without any reason, when we discover that we are living constantly with an internal tension, that might be an indication that there are unresolved issues in our life that need to be faced. That is a sign that destructive anger controls us. Destructive anger always needs to be eliminated.

Constructive anger is healthy. It helps us identify what is wrong and should motivate us to work against it. Are we not “Temples of the Holy Spirit” through our Baptism and Confirmation? Should we not be angry when this human “temple” is abused by hatred, discrimination, violence, injustice and by a lack of respect for all human life from

conception to natural death? If we recognize that policies of our job, of our church, or of our society discriminate against the poor or oppress the weak, shouldn't constructive anger cause us to speak out, to organize, to work for what is right?

There is no doubt Jesus is the prince of Peace. But he is also the Lord of Justice. Jesus did not sit meekly by when he saw evil being imposed on others. Jesus was not afraid of constructive anger. He used it to build the kingdom. Too many evils have slowly entered our world today because Christians have not got angry enough to stand up for the values of Jesus. How sad!!!