

### **Third Sunday of Lent, March 4, 2018**

A young lady was singing, dancing and swinging her umbrella as she walked along the street. She was so immersed in her singing and dancing that she did not see an old man passing by. Her umbrella almost touched his nose. The old man stopped and said, "Young lady, please watch your umbrella." The young lady said, "Look mister, I have the freedom to sing, dance and swing my umbrella." Then the old man said, "Yes, you have freedom, but your freedom ends where my nose begins."

God created us to live in freedom. God also gave us his commandments to live that freedom with reverence to God and with respect for other's life and property. Today's first reading speaks about the Ten commandments given by God to the people of Israel through Moses. God made covenant with His chosen people. In that Covenant, God promised to make the Jews His own people, to lead them to the Promised Land and to protect them from their enemies. The people, in return, agreed to obey the Ten Commandments and other laws given by Yahweh through Moses. The Covenant offered these people a society genuinely free, secure, mutually respectful and trustworthy, superior to neighboring societies, and more humane than anything that the earth had yet seen.

The Ten Commandments are based on two basic principles, namely, the principle of reverence and the principle of respect. The first four commandments demand from us reverence for God, reverence for His holy name, reverence for His holy day (Sabbath) and reverence for our father and mother. The remaining commandments ask us to respect life, to respect the bodies of other persons, to respect the good name of people and to respect our neighbor's wife and his property.

Today's Gospel gives the dramatic account of Jesus' cleansing the Temple of its merchants and money-changers, followed by a prediction of his death and Resurrection. Jesus entered the temple area and drove out the merchants and the money changers. He said to them, quotes Zechariah 14:21, "Stop making my Father's house a marketplace." This seems at first glance to support the interpretation of the event as a cleansing. However, the greater emphasis here is not so much on the cleansing of the Temple but on the replacement of the Temple. The Temple in Jerusalem was the place where God made His Name or

Glory to dwell. With Jesus' coming on the scene, the Temple was no longer important in Jewish life as John tells the story. The Temple ceased to have a function. Jesus' promise of a new Temple suggested that God's glory would be manifested, not in a building, but in a person. By the end of the first Christian century, whenever Christians heard the word Temple, they no longer thought of the temple which Solomon had originally constructed, but of the risen Jesus. Risen Jesus, who was the Temple, which had been destroyed and raised up again in three days. Jesus had replaced and superseded everything the Temple had formerly symbolized. By his prophetic actions in the Temple, Jesus made it clear that the God Who gave the Law on Sinai could not be bought by sacrifice or bribe. Jesus is the Temple in Whom His followers come into contact with God.

Paul reminds us that we are God's temples because the Spirit of God dwells in us. Hence, we have no right to desecrate God's temple by impurity and injustice. We are expected to cleanse our hearts of pride, hatred, jealousy and all evil thoughts, desires and plans.

Our Church is the place where we come together as a community to love and praise God. It is the holy place where we gather strength to support one another in the task of living the Gospel. It is the place where we come privately to enter into intimate conversation with God. In this building many prodigal sons and daughters have met the merciful Lord in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and have been welcomed back to our community. In this building, tears have been shed by those in pain and grief. Let's look around our Church this morning and treasure it.

In this context I would like to remind you about the *One Church and many disciples* campaign, that our archdiocese has initiated and about which Fr. Rex spoke last weekend. Next weekend the in-pew survey will take place in our church. The key outcome of the survey is to receive opinions and advice regarding a campaign to address St. John's facility, building, safety needs as well as support the *One Church many Disciples* campaign. God created us free and that freedom is experienced in its entirety in the presence of God. May the presence of God bring us freedom and may we share that freedom with others.