



## Meditation for the Third Sunday in Lent March 7 2021

*Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!*

[John 2:16]

We read the story of the cleansing of the temple only once every three years, on the Third Sunday of Lent. All four gospels tell this story, although the version in the Gospel of John that we read today places it at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, rather than at the end; for John, Jesus' outburst represents a starting point for his ministry, whereas in the other gospels it is presented as the event that precipitates Jesus' arrest and ultimately his crucifixion. In the other gospels, then, this is understood to be primarily a *political* act that threatened the institutional and social authority of the temple authorities. For John, though, it is primarily a *symbolic* act by which Jesus demonstrates that he himself—indeed, his body—is the new Temple, the place where God is henceforth present in this world. In the liturgical cycle, the story has for a long time been an allegory for the purification of candidates preparing for baptism at Easter: in our union with Christ in baptism, each us becomes a new Temple.

As we approach the midway point in Lent, the gospel calls us to reassess our Lenten resolutions. Have they led to the clarity that we hoped for? What has gotten in the way of our fulfilling the promises that we made to give, fast, and pray? As for myself, this week I put a bowl of coins on our kitchen counter so that I would be more likely to follow the calendar for putting coins in the Heifer International Ark Box as I promised to do. Each day I looked at the calendar and yet didn't get around to going into another room for my wallet, let alone to taking the time or do the task suggested by the calendar. Making that change has made it easier to keep my promise. Now is the time for all of us to recalibrate what we need to do in order for our Lenten journey to be what we hoped it would be.

We "turn the tables upside down" during Lent, not just so that we will be better, more "pure" people. Rather, our whole purpose is to reveal the mystery, the mercy, the absolute and infinite love of God.

This meditation by Steven Charleston speaks to this need to renew our Lenten promises:

*Your spiritual journey is measured not by how many answers you have accumulated, but by how many questions you have confronted. We are not gods who must know everything, gatekeepers to truth—we are seekers who look for the truth where it may be most difficult to find. Our wisdom is not in what we know, but in what we wonder. The light beyond the hill calls us to leave the shadows, even if the shadows were our pride and our possession.*

*Ladder to the Light, p. 90*