

210307 3rd Sunday, 40 Days of Prayer B.
Toon Suffys SJ

Do you also like it to be quiet in church when we come together to pray? It sometimes bothers me when I am early in the church that there is noise. But if we want many people to come to church, then we must also accept that human noise goes with it.

When you think of the temple in Jerusalem, thousands of pilgrims come together and they have to offer animal sacrifices. During those pilgrimage days, thousands of animals were slaughtered as a gift to God. What a noise that must have been: large cattle and smaller animals like birds. They had to be kept and sold to the pilgrims and then slaughtered. Apparently Jesus also longed for more silence: no haggling of animal sellers and money changers, no roaring of frightened animals, no noise of a wriggling crowd ... Jesus wanted to purify the temple and bring it back to the essence of faith: a place of encounter, for God and man.

And then He says: Tear down this temple and in three days I will build a new one! The evangelist adds the reflection: He meant the temple of His body. He himself is the place of encounter between God and man. Even if we tear down that temple, Jesus will provide a new place where we can turn to God. He himself is our way to God.

Therefore, in the tradition of the Church, He has provided strong times where we can purify the temple of our hearts. The preparation time towards Christmas and Easter are excellent opportunities to allow Jesus to take away all the excess that hinders us from meeting God.

This week we had a (zoom) meeting with a meditation group. We talked about how we prepare ourselves for Easter. A young woman compared Lent to a pregnancy. She emphasised the joy of being pregnant. When you become pregnant, life does become more difficult. You can do less, you have to restrict yourself and you have to carry a burden. But you do it with joy because you expect new life and you learn to discover new sides of your own life.

For all of us, Lent can be a journey to discover that new life. To discover that there is more to us than fear and uncertainty, than confinement and loneliness, than selfishness and sin. We are indeed people on the path to God and we live that way.

How about, during Lent, we look back each evening on the day gone by and search for the moments when it was good, moments when we may discover the new life of God in ourselves. That comes to us in small, everyday signs:

- a phone call, a good conversation, a sign of sympathy,
- a ray of sunshine, birds singing,
- a thank you, a please, something nice in the mouth.

Let us remember that we have more virtues than vices. Can we discover in our daily lives that we have received already the gifts of the Spirit? The fruits of the Spirit are:

love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Will we know at Easter that these fruits of the Spirit are in us? Will we discover in our own hearts that we have already received the new life of Christ? Will we find in our hearts, at Easter, that temple which Jesus has purified?