

FATHER MARK SCHULTE HOMILY
Third Sunday of Lent (B)
March 7, 2021
“Respect For God – Respect For His Home”

The days of Lent are passing by quickly and we find ourselves at the Third Sunday of Lent.

- The first reading is taken from Exodus with God delivering the Ten Commandments to Moses.
- The Gospel recounts how Jesus drove the money changes and animals out of the temple. If we look closely, we can find a correlation between the commandments and the temple cleansing event. Especially, the first three commandments.

Let's look at the Ten Commandments first. If you have been participating in our Adult Education classes – you will know that we are currently covering the Ten Commandments.

The first three commandments deal with our relationship with God:

1. “I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt not have strange Gods before me.”
2. “Do not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.”
3. “Remember to keep Holy the Lord's day.”

The remaining seven commandments deal with our relationship with our neighbor.

4. Honor your Father and Mother.
5. You shall not kill.
6. You shall not steal.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not lie.
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

If we live the first three commandments (which pertain to God) properly – the remaining seven commandments regarding our neighbor will naturally fall in line.

i.e.: If our relationship with God is good, then our relationship with our neighbors will be good as well.

The key is to give due reverence to God first.

Now, let's look at the Gospel:

When we look at the Gospel, we see that Jesus was very upset with how his Father's house was being treated. They were disrespecting the Temple of God. "Stop turning my Father's house into a marketplace," Jesus said.

How did this disrespect for the temple come about? Why was it happening? It happened because the people lost sight of the first 3 commandments. They lost their respect for God. Their relationship with God had collapsed.

From our respect for God comes our respect for his house, his temple, his church.

When we break the first three commandments, we in essence, replace God with ourselves. We become more important than God. We make ourselves like God. "Who is like God"? St. Michael said in the Book of Revelation.

Our church is God's house, and we must treat it as God's house. We are visitors in His House. If we respect and give reverence to God, we will then treat his house with respect as well. After all, don't we ask the same thing of those who visit our own homes.

In God's house we focus on God at all times, not on ourselves. Our attention and devotion are given to God alone. This can be hard to do when we allow ourselves to become distracted – when we come out of a world full of distractions.

When we fail to focus on God alone, we turn his house into something else like the Jews did in the Gospel passage.

The Church becomes:

- An "activity" center.
- A "meeting" place just like other places.
- A place of "entertainment".
- A "call center" for our cell phone.

The Jews lost track of the first three commandments and, therefore, their relationship with God – and then they turned his house into a marketplace. Why? Because they lost their respect for God.

Lent should be a time to increase our devotion to God. This can and should express itself in how we conduct ourselves in God's house, our Church.

When we focus on the first three commandments:

(1) We Respect God ➡ (2) We Respect His House ➡ (3) We Respect Our Neighbor

But it all starts with Respecting God first whom we should love above all things.

In the Church, we should:

- Confine our conversation to God alone (i.e., prayer).
- Pay close attention to how we worship him.
- Respect the worship time of other people.
- Catch up on the latest news out in the gathering space (and your phone messages), not in the church.
- Carefully teach our children to respect the church.

Our God is a jealous God. He will not tolerate other gods before Him, especially, when we put ourselves and our activities before Him.