



PARISH OF ST. AGATHA

6TH/7TH MARCH 2021



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Jesus I Trust in You

POPE FRANCIS ON PILGRIMAGE IN IRAQ

Pope Francis said in his homily during the concluding Mass for his Apostolic Journey to Iraq. “Today, I can see at first hand that the Church in Iraq is alive, and that Christ is alive and at work in this, His holy and faithful people.” The Holy Father based his homily on a passage today from St Paul: “Christ, the power and wisdom of God.” Jesus, he said, “revealed that power and wisdom above all by offering forgiveness and showing mercy.” Too often, we “fall into the trap of thinking that we have to show others that we are powerful or wise” the Pope said. Suffering from “wounds of war and violence” we are tempted to react “with human power, human wisdom.” “Yet the truth is that all of us need the power and wisdom of God revealed by Jesus on the Cross,” said Pope Francis.

Cleansing the temple of our heart

Turning to Sunday’s Gospel reading, which tells how the Lord drove the moneychangers out of the Temple, Pope Francis said God the Father sent Jesus to cleanse not only the Temple built of stone, “but above all, the temple of our hearts.” Our hearts, he said, must be cleansed “of the falsehoods that stain them, from hypocritical duplicity,” of “deceptive securities”; of “baneful temptations of power and money.” But we cannot cleanse our hearts by our own effort, the Pope said. Instead, it is “Jesus Christ, He alone, [who] can cleanse us of the works of evil... He has the power to conquer our evils, to heal our diseases, and to rebuild the temple of our heart.”

Signs of Christ’s Kingdom

Pope Francis continued, saying, “Jesus not only cleanses us of our sins, but gives us a share in His own power and wisdom.” Jesus, he said, frees us from “narrow and divisive notions of family, faith and community” to build an inclusive Church and society that cares for our brothers and sisters in need. At the same time, Jesus “strengthens us to resist the temptation to seek revenge,” and sends us forth, “not as proselytisers (to convert a person from one religion to another), but as missionary disciples, men and women to testify to the life-changing power of the Gospel.” When He promises to raise up the Temple after three days, the Pope said, Jesus is not talking only of his own bodily Resurrection, “but of the Church as well.” The Lord, he said, “promises us that, by the power of the resurrection, He can raise us, and our communities, from the ruins left by injustice, division, and hatred. “Jesus, said Pope Francis, “wants to anoint every hurt, to heal every painful memory, and to inspire a future of peace and fraternity in this land.”

Confirming Iraqi Christians in their faith

Turning to the Iraqi Christian community, the Holy Father concluded his homily, saying, “The Church in Iraq, by God’s grace, is already doing much to proclaim this wonderful wisdom of the Cross by spreading Christ’s mercy and forgiveness, particularly towards those in greatest need.” This, the Pope said, “is one of the reasons that led me to come as a pilgrim in your midst, to thank you and to confirm you in your faith and witness.”

Pope blesses statue of Mary

Pope Francis blessed a statue of the Virgin Mary that had been vandalised by Islamic State militants. The head and hands of the statue had been cut off, but the head was later recovered and reattached. At the Church of the Immaculate Conception, in the northern Iraqi town of Qaraosh, Pope Francis met with members of the local Christian population, urging them to rebuild their communities based on forgiveness and fraternity. (Vatican News/Christopher Wells).

CLEANSING THE TEMPLE OF OUR HEARTS

Jesus entered the Temple and *making a whip out of some cord, He drove them all out of the Temple, cattle and sheep as well, scattered the money-changers’ coins, knocked their tables over and said to the pigeon-sellers, ‘Take all this out of here and stop turning my Father’s house into a market.’* We must remember that when we were made in the image of Christ, our bodies were transfigured into holy temples sharing in the sacred and holy divinity of Christ in our Baptism. The scene in today’s Gospel (John 2:13-25), describes what happens in the Sacrament of Confession, where Jesus drives out anything that should not be in our hearts. The temple of our heart is made for heavenly things, especially to worship and love God and neighbour. When we sin, we allow Satan to misuse the holy temple of our hearts, by over indulging in worldly possessions and love of money. We can become distracted and fill the temple of our hearts with the unholy activities of world economics.

BLESS ME FATHER OF MERCY FOR I HAVE SINNED

In the Sacrament of Confession, Jesus enters the temple of our heart and with Authority, drives out all unclean spirits. Jesus dispels all the darkness of sin and replaces it with His Divine Light and Peace, restoring us back to spiritual health and the fullness of Grace and Holiness. He restores it to its right purpose as He created it. Every Confession is a form of exorcism, because Jesus expels and casts out whatever sins were ruling us. The First Reading today (Exodus 20:1-17), informs us what God considers a sin which is the work of the devil. He tells us not to have false gods, such as statues of foreign cults, such as Buddhism, Tarot Cards, Sacred Stones, even cremated ashes of our loved ones, because they must be laid to rest in a cemetery, to let the dead go. We are not to take the Holy Name of Jesus or God in vain. He expects us not to work or shop on a Sunday, but to rest and be prayerful as a family that day. I know this is a difficult task to do, but if we choose not to buy anything on a Sunday, then shops would not have to open. There are six other days in the week. It is a worthwhile sacrifice to give to God by obeying His Commandments.

TEN COMMANDMENTS STILL EXIST

We are commanded to honour our father and mother. We must not kill, which includes murder inside and outside of the womb or with the sharp edge of our tongues. We must not commit adultery. The temple of our hearts were divinely ordered to love God first and foremost, we are bound to Him in a Covenant, so if the mind and eyes entertain impure images, then it is guilty of committing adultery against God, in the bedroom of the heart. We are not to steal or bear false witness against our neighbour, which means not to gossip behind someone’s back. We are not to let the sin of pride rule us or be envious or jealous of each other or desire and steal another man or woman’s spouse or belongings.

OUR BODIES ARE HOLY TEMPLES

To commit sin is to misuse the temple of our body in a way it was not created for, just like the people misusing the purpose of the temple in the Gospel today. Jesus tells us that He will raise the Temple in three days, which we now know is His Resurrection from the dead. However, He is reminding us that we too, will be raised from the dead to come before the Judgement Seat. He is warning us not to come with a corrupt temple of the soul before Him. We are to cleanse the temple of our hearts and souls now before it is too late. God expects us to die to our sins, first by carrying our crosses in this pilgrimage of earthly life and then mounting that cross, to crucify temptation and sin to it. We do this by dying to our old sinful ways, in order for a new life of divine Grace to take possession of our hearts here on earth. Our bodies should be spiritual altars in which to make the sacrifice of a holy and pure life to God. If we live in a state of sin, then our bodies become corrupt temples, unholy altars that please Satan, especially if it offers up its unborn. This displeases God terribly but it is never too late to repent with a contrite heart and ask Jesus to enter our hearts to heal them with His Divine Loving Mercy. Individual private confessions are available by appointment to all parishioners. God bless, Fr. Brendan.