

## Honoring the Sabbath

The cleansing of the temple today is almost certainly what precipitated Jesus' arrest. It is almost certainly what set into motion the events that would lead inexorably to his crucifixion. Take a moment to imagine just how incendiary his action was. You know how volatile things are today in Jerusalem. Can you imagine what would have happened if someone were to pull the kind of stunt Jesus pulled at one of the holy places in Jerusalem today?

Jesus had to know that such a provocation would force the hands not only of the temple priests but also of the Roman authorities. So why did he do it? Did he simply lose his cool? Or was it premeditated, a carefully calculated prophetic act designed for maximum impact? Well Jesus was no hothead. And even hotheads don't tend to go off half-cocked in a room full of dynamite and gasoline. In fact hadn't Jesus already warned his disciples that things were going to take a decided turn for the worse when they arrived in Jerusalem?

No, Jesus knew exactly what he was doing. The question is why did he do it? What was he trying to say by such an inflammatory gesture?

"Stop turning my father's house into a marketplace!" he screams at the animal vendors and moneychangers. Now one might ask oneself today what were people doing changing money and selling farm animals in the temple in the first place. But we must be careful that we not miss the point. Money changers were needed because people could not contribute Roman coins to the temple. That would profane it. Rather people needed to change their Roman money into sacred Temple coins first. The selling of doves, even of sheep and oxen within the temple precincts also have a reasonable logic to it. The animals being sold were for temple sacrifices. Mary and Joseph themselves had bought two turtle doves in the temple to offer as a sacrifice on behalf of Jesus shortly after his own birth. It was only convenient, even efficient to have animals available for sale at the same place where they were going to be needed. It only made sense.

It made sense, but I suspect, for Jesus, it did not make the right kind of sense. It was convenient, but it made the temple into a noisy bazaar. It was efficient, but it obscured the very purpose for making sacrifices to God in the first place--Not to reward God, but to remind us of what is truly important in our lives. Of regaining our perspective on things, something so easy to lose in the hectic rush of our everyday life. The whole purpose of setting a place off apart from main street and making it special, treating it as a holy place, is that upon entering into its precincts we are reminded that life itself is holy, that the true value of our own lives is not defined by how much money we make or by how successful we are, but by how well we live up to the kind of life that God calls us to, that kind of life set before us in his ten commandments.

That we need such reminders is even incorporated into one of the commandments themselves. Keep holy the Sabbath. Just as we need to set apart sacred spaces so too we need to set apart sacred times. We need to weave into our everyday routine, time, periodically, to step out of that routine, to relativize the demands of our routine, by remembering what it is that makes the routine important for us in the first place. We need times to step out of our routine so that we not lose ourselves in our routines and end up being ruled by a ruler.

We need such holy places and such holy times to keep our balance amidst the press of everyday life. That we might live our lives mindfully. My former ski buddy, Steve Kuder liked to say that while we often complain that we never have enough time, in the end that is all we do have, time. The question is what we do with it. Not how much time we have, even how long we have to live, but what we do with the time we do have. How we respect our time. How we live in the time we have been given.

We gather *here, now*, to ritually re-enact the Christian sacrifice. Not sacrifice as public spectacle, a loud and gory slaughter of sheep and goats, but a simple token sharing of bread and wine. Its been estimated that in Jesus day, bread constituted 80% or more of a peasants diet. People were literally made of bread. In consecrating bread we are consecrating ourselves.

We are currently creating another sacred space as well, a place in the rocks, out of sight of the road, to pray before Mary, Our Lady of the Lake,. It will also be a sacred place to commemorate those who have been sacred to us in our own lives, a sacred place to remember our own family saints, to whom we owe so much, whose presence still haunts us.

In the end need sacred places and sacred times not only because God is holy but to remind ourselves that we are holy too. To remind ourselves that we need to treat one another with that same reverence and awe we tend to reserve for God alone, to remember that we need to govern ourselves not merely according to the canons of convenience and the exigencies of efficiency, but in accord with our own true worth--a worth far surpassing whatever we might win by our success or buy with our wealth--a worth which cannot be spoiled however much we may have lost through being abused and exploited by others, however shamefully we may have sold ourselves out in the pastBa worth surpassing that of the most precious pearl, or the greatest of buried treasuresBa worth that is ours by virtue of our being called, each one of us, to be like Jesus, a son of God, a daughter of the Most High.