

## THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT - B

Three years ago when we heard this Gospel the Knights of Columbus were selling pierogi in the foyer of the church.

I joked with them about Jesus expelling the merchants from the Temple.

I also think of this Gospel whenever we are selling raffle tickets after Mass.

I ask myself, "Should we really be doing this?"

As I reflect upon this practice so common in our houses of worship ... at least before COVID ... I have discovered a simple, yet profound criterion for discernment:

If the activity is promoting the mission of the Church then it should be allowed. If not, it should not take place.

For instance, the money raised by the sale of those pierogi helped fund the purchase of an ultrasound machine at the Women's Center.

Ultimately the pierogi were promoting the respect for the rights of the unborn and saving lives.

And, it was a unique opportunity, not a weekly occurrence.

As we continue our journey through Lent we are called to discernment regarding our motivations.

Why do we do the things we do?

For instance, is our obedience to the Commandments based on fear of punishment or on our love for God?

One of the themes of this Year B cycle of Lenten readings is the various covenants between God and humanity.

Week one contained the covenant with Noah and all of creation. Week two described the covenant with Abraham and his descendants.

This week we have the covenant of the Law given through Moses.

The Torah of the Old Testament was a considered a sacred reflection of the wisdom of God, "more precious than a heap of purest gold."

By contrast, St. Paul tells us that Jesus crucified is the wisdom of God and the power of God.

The covenants of old were a preparation for the new and eternal covenant established through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Through him we are reconciled to the Father.

In today's Gospel Jesus speaks in metaphor about destroying the Temple and raising it up in three days.

In Jewish thought, the Temple was believed to have been built on the "navel of the world" and was the center of the cosmos.

The Temple represented the presence of God in the midst of his people.

When Jesus says "Destroy this Temple and I will rebuild it," he is referring to his death and resurrection which establish him as the Christ, the center of the universe, the Alpha and the Omega, the point of contact with God.

And he will create a new temple, his Body the Church, as his dwelling place in the Spirit.

His New Covenant, sealed with his Blood, is based upon the supreme love and mercy of God revealed in his Son.

You and I are called to live in a relationship of love with God through, with, and in Christ.

With the love of Jesus Christ as the center of our lives, this love is meant to overflow in love and service toward our neighbor, especially the "least of these."

And so, in the love of Christ, even selling pierogi can be a way of continuing his mission through his Body the Church.