

My dear brothers and sisters, the basic theme that runs through the readings is the Ten Commandments and reverence for God. The commandments help us to live well with God and our neighbors. The commandment was given to the people of Israel through Moses, which we read today from the Book of Exodus. These are the Ten Commandments: I am the Lord your God. You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve. You shall not have other gods before me. You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain. Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day. Honor your father and your mother, that you may have a long life in the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you. You shall not kill. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. That is, **we should not destroy the honor and reputation of others through lies, slander and gossip**. Instead we should be honest in our relationship with others. We must defend others and think and speak well of them...

These commandments may appear to be ancient and obsolete, but they are a practical standard for life for all ages. Yes. Jesus reminds us that obedience to God begins with accepting the Ten Commandments as the permanent standard of our values and for our behavior. Jesus says, "**Anyone who infringes on even one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be considered the least in the kingdom of Heaven; but the person who keeps them and teaches them will be considered great in the kingdom of Heaven**", Matthew (5:17-19). Again, Jesus explicitly shows that we must, first and foremost, obey the Ten Commandments. For instance, when a man asked Jesus what he must do to possess eternal life Jesus said to him, "**If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.**" The man said, "**Which ones?**" Jesus replied, "**You shall not kill. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false witness. Honor your father and mother. You shall love your neighbor as yourself**", Matthew (19:16-19).

Beloved in Christ, I know someone may ask what is the connection between the commandments and the cleansing of the Temple? The answer is simple; anyone who loves God keeps his commandments, and the one who keeps his commandments also reveres his dwelling place. That is why after Jesus performed his first miracle at Cana in Galilee; Jesus made his way to Jerusalem and went up to the Temple to pray and to preach the Good News that He had come to bring to the earth. Jesus was surprised to see the Temple of God, filled with merchants and traffickers of every kind of noise. The place was not conducive enough for prayer. Jesus drove the sellers out of the Temple. This simple act, accompanied by Jesus' words to the merchants and the traffickers, is enough for the disciples of Jesus to remember this passage from the psalm: "Zeal for thy house will consume me" (*Ps. 68:10*).

John 2:13-25, presents us with the Johannine version of Jesus' cleansing of the Temple. Though the Fourth Gospel, unlike the Synoptic Gospels, places this episode at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, whereas the synoptic Gospels associate it with his passion. According to New Interpreter's Bible Commentary, the synoptic chronology is more historically reliable, because it is difficult to see how the Jewish religious authorities would have tolerated such a confrontation act at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. John moves the Temple scene to the beginning of the Gospel because it serves a symbolic function for him. Jesus begins his ministry by cleaning the Temple. Why? Because he is the one whom John identified as the Lamb of God who had come into the Temple. Besides, Jesus identifies himself as the true Temple, the true Presence of God, living among his people. "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up" (Jn.2:19).

Finally, dear friends, God gave his commandments to us out of love so that we may attain true happiness. Jesus summed up the commandments into two: namely; love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind and love your neighbor as yourself (Mt.22:37 and 39). Anyone who loves God should also love his Temple, because the love of God goes with deep reverence for the Lord. Remember the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Prov.1:7; 9:10). Let us do our best to love one another and to create a conducive environment for the worship of true God. Let us always remember that God is Spirit and therefore worship Him in spirit and in truth and He will bless us. Amen!