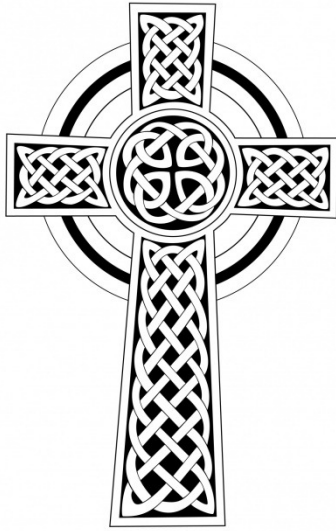


A Temple Tantrum

3rd Tuesday of Lent



Mark 11:15-19

Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold doves; and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. He was teaching and saying: 'Is it not written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations"? But you have made it a den of robbers.' And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching. And when evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.

Spin it anyway you want, but Jesus' ire rises to the surface here like a volcano blowing its top. In one unexpected move he drove merchants and customers from the temple, overturning tables and chairs, and pretty much trashing the place.

The temple merchants provided a useful service to worshippers—converting the coin of the realm into temple coins, selling doves needed for sacrifice, etc. Some have conjectured that what raised Jesus' ire was not so much the commercial activity, but the exorbitant prices charged by the merchants who did business there. What was intended as *a house of prayer for all nations* had become a house of prayer for only those who could pay the fare.

There may well have been a time in your own life or the life of someone you love when the worship of the church and the fellowship of the church seemed less than welcoming. What can you do to help others feel at home in the house of the Lord? In what ways can the community of the church reach out more effectively to embrace the stranger and especially those different from the rest of us and help them know they are welcome? Give it some thought. Those of us on the inside have a responsibility to offer hospitality to those on the outside. Look around your congregation this Sunday and see who may be alone or who may look lost and reach out.

Prayer

Dear Lord, in my life help me to show the love and welcoming presence of Jesus to others so that they too may know the comfort of the people of God.