

# Nothing's Wasted

## Introduction

I am delighted to be with all of you at this Mass and for the dinner that follows in support of such a worthy cause and in memory of a wonderful priest, Father Frank McGauley. I stand before you with gratitude and admiration for all the good work that you do in providing clean water to the poor in India. Jesus told us that we would not lose our reward merely for giving a cup of water to those who belong to his Name. Surely those living in impoverished and remote areas are among the least ones with whom Jesus identified most closely.

## Spring Cleaning

Even though we just had another significant snowfall a couple days ago, we know that the warmer weather is coming and spring is almost here. That time of year is approaching when we perform our traditional spring cleaning. It is a time to go over everything thoroughly. While we dust and clean all year round, it's good to throw open the windows and have that thorough cleaning.

In today's Gospel, Jesus seems to be giving the Temple in Jerusalem a spring cleaning. The moneychangers who converted Roman money into the Jewish shekel were disrespectfully setting up shop in the Temple precincts. The Temple had become a busy marketplace instead of a house of worship. Then Jesus swept in with change and reclaimed reverence for His Father's house. Jesus' dramatic actions in the Temple have been referred to as a cleansing. The cleansing of the Temple is also a prophetic sign of what Jesus wants to do with each of us this Lent - He wants to cleanse us of our sins and make us living temples of the Holy Spirit.

## Allowing Ourselves To Be Cleansed

If the truth be known, today's Gospel story is a bit off-putting. What if the parish sodality put on a bake sale in the back of church some Sunday and the pastor came and furiously overturned all the tables and drove them out? You can be sure that the chancery phones and emails would be buzzing on Monday. How many times I have had the temerity to wonder why Jesus did deal even with the temple money-changers more gently, as one who was meek and humble of heart? And we, who are temples of the Holy Spirit, are now asking Jesus to cleanse us. What makes us think

that he will be merciful to us when we submit the temple of our body to him for cleansing?

Well, let's drill down a little more on the idea of a spring house cleaning. People have different ideas about spring house cleaning. Some think it should never be done, preferring that "lived-in" look. Others think of spring house cleaning in terms of getting out the feather duster and spraying a little Fabreeze here and there. Still others, like my grandmother of German descent, think of spring house cleaning as a major operation in which dust and dirt hadn't a ghost of a chance. Rugs were beaten, floors were scrubbed, windows were washed, closets emptied. If we grandkids got in the way, we were also scrubbed. But what was the result? Grandma's old house not only looked clean, it was clean, "like 'brand-new'", she'd say with justifiable pride. Was she being mean? Rough-and-tough? No, she was doing her job and doing it well because she loved her family and her home was her family's "temple".

And that's the way it is with us. The Lord loves us so much that he doesn't want us to live with dirt, the dust, even the filth that our sins create in the depths of our hearts. So it was that he proposed commandments to help us know right from wrong, to help us know what we should avoid and reject so as not to sully ourselves. But more than that, Jesus knows us and sees deep into our hearts. He sees not just the surface but those sins that have become woven into the fabric of our lives, those bad habits, those self-centered thoughts and attitudes, of which we ourselves are only dimly aware. Because he loves us, he is calling us to a deep and thorough cleansing during this Season of Lent and indeed every day of our lives.

### **How Jesus Cleanses Us**

Thankfully Jesus does not cleanse us with whips and cords but he is out to overturn in our hearts every bad intention, every form of malice, impurity, and deceit. He is seeking entry into our heart not only to cleanse us of our sins but to make our souls clean and bright with God's glory, a place of peace, a source of truth and love, adorned with virtue.

How does Jesus accomplish this in our hearts? First, he invites you and me to make a truly prayerful, unburdening confession of our sins in the Sacrament of

Reconciliation sometime during Lent. We should sit with the Scriptures, perhaps today's 1st reading from Exodus in which God delivers his commandments to his beloved people. That's a good place to start for thorough examination of conscience. We should see his commands not as burdens but precepts that are trustworthy, wise, clear, and enlightening, a way of out of the slavery of sin to the freedom of God's life and love. When we receive absolution, Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit, cleanses us from our sins and gives us grace to live as his disciples.

But our Lenten deep-cleaning goes further. It requires that we give up something, that we sacrifice, so that we root out of our hearts those bad habits we acquire like barnacles on a ship. It might be fasting from food or drink, turning off TV or the I-phone for a while, making a point of reconciling with an enemy, or the like.

And our deep cleansing also involves going beyond ourselves in love. When we are self-centered, our souls become foul. But when we open our hearts in love to God and to others, especially to those who are the most needy and vulnerable, then our hearts are deep-cleaned and shine even more brightly with God's glory.

## **Conclusion**

Lent is a time to take stock and to do a spiritual inventory. This special season includes daily opportunities to allow God's word to work within us with its power and truth, to uncover our sinfulness, to fill us with a resolve to do better, to be better, to grow, change, and be cleansed in the power of his grace.

In days to come, we shall see the temple of Jesus' body crucified out of love for us. His body was broken that we could be made whole. Truly "the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength." May we open our hearts to Jesus, crucified and risen, the true temple of the new covenant, so that when these forty days of Lent have run their course, our hearts may be cleansed of sin and aglow with his risen glory, the glory of God shining on the face of Christ. May God bless us and keep us always in His love.