

Msgr. Bill's Weekly Letter...

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Ten Commandments were one of the very first things we learned in catechism. I still remember Sr. Mary Martin teaching us CCE classes during our release time from government school. We would walk from Fayetteville-Manlius School to St. Ann's Parish which was a few blocks over and for the next hour or so we learned the truths of our faith.

Most days it was a pleasant walk, but from January to mid-March, it was a brutal journey, which helped to increase our appreciation of working heaters. The break from sub-zero temperatures had a way of opening our minds although, in my case, I think the cold was a bit too much and my mind did not thaw out until we finished the class. Perhaps you have had similar experiences.

If we step back and look at the Decalogue in a somewhat critical manner, the first three commandments refer to our relationship with God our Father and the next seven to our relationship with the human family (who are also God's Family). Common to all ten is the fact that God could not, not have these ten. He could not say that we don't have to worship him, not keep his day holy, or use his name in a frivolous manner nor in vain. He was incapable of saying that whatever you think of me is, "OK," and how you worship me does not make a "Tinker's Dam" of difference.

Sometimes people may imply that the radicals in the sixties or even today are somehow like Jesus casting out the moneychangers. Not really! First, the moneychangers were performing a needed service. Jews came from many different countries to worship. They needed to change their currency into shekels to purchase animals for sacrifice in the temple.



He was cleansing the temple, which was one of the expectations for the Messiah. The moneychangers took a service and turned it into a way to enrich themselves, their focus being on profit not to glorify the Lord God. Also, note that the Gospel does not tell us Jesus is angry. Perhaps he was more frustrated that the men had not realized that the temple should be a place to worship God not to enrich oneself.

We might ask ourselves if we are too concerned about our financial position or earthly comfort or looking good in front of our neighbors. When I come to worship my God in this 'temple' of St. Vincent de Paul, am I truly putting God first? Do I value my sport, my comfort, etc. over my time with God? Is this 'temple' and my time here above my time fishing or golfing? There are myriads of questions.

Are there moneychangers in our hearts today? Am I allowing a cynicism into the temple of my soul to the extent that I am suspicious of my neighbors? Have I reached a point that new comers may "upset" my comfort zone and a xenophobic attitude enters my heart?

Today's Gospel involves much more than money for it is about hearts and souls and where God resides. If we believe God is God, then he must be first in our time, talent, and treasure. There can be no other legitimate position. Not to do so, is to commit a sin (mortal or venial). Either God is most important, our loving Father who demands his children listen to commands, or someone or something else is. It is good to remember what Jesus says about the lukewarm (cf. Rev. 3:16). Let us allow Jesus to overturn the tables in our heart in order to cleanse and restore the purity of body, mind, and soul that we may truly allow God to be God in us.

We are getting closer and closer to the greatest celebration of our Church's year. Let us sweep out the dust, polish the silverware, open the curtains, and receive with joy the risen Lord of light and love.

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Msgr. Bill