Third Sunday of Lent (B)

There was a song in my day by Mic Jager called I Can't Get No Satisfaction. Over and over, he complains that he can't seem to be satisfied in anything!

I can't get no satisfaction
I can't get no satisfaction
Cause I try and I try and I try and I try
I can't get no, I can't get no

We all want to be **satisfied** in life. But satisfaction can't be found in person, place, or thing. St Augustine states: Our Hearts are restless unless they rest in you oh, Lord! He should know because he tried everything to find peace and only found it when he turned everything over to God.

- That's what **happiness** is, really, the achievement of **satisfaction**, of spiritual contentment, of a sense of **fulfillment** that doesn't wear out.
- Everything we do is **directed** towards that end.
- It's like we have a **homing device** built into our hearts, and it keeps drawing us towards fulfillment and satisfaction.
- We keep seeking new activities, accomplishments, relationships, adventures - all because we feel this **interior drive for fulfillment**, meaning, and happiness.
- This is a **good thing**.
- God **made** us that way.
- He **put** the homing device in our hearts, because he wants us to find that satisfaction and fulfillment, that happiness.

But there is a **problem**.

- Ever since **sin** entered into the world, we have had a tendency to **look** for this fulfillment in the **wrong places**. Just like Johnny Lee's song Looking for Love!
- God designed the human heart to find its lasting fulfillment in a deep, personal, ongoing **friendship with him** - in what the Catechism calls "**communion with God**" (#45).
- This is why the first three commandments, as we read in today's First Reading, have to do with our relationship with God - that's the most important thing. (1) No other God but God! (2) His name and all associated with it is Holy (3) To keep holy the day that belongs to God. That day no matter what is to be held sacred!
- But our fallen human nature tends to look for it in **other** places: career success, money, pleasure, power, sports, gadgets. popularity...
- But that is **wrong**.
- Those things are **fine in themselves**, and they have their place in the human story.
- But they **cannot substitute God**!
- **Only God** can satisfy our deepest longing.

And that's why Jesus gets so **worked up** in today's Gospel passage.

- The **Temple** was set aside as a place where people could go to **pray**, to **encounter God** and develop their friendship with him.
- But all of these **merchants and money changers** had made it into a **mall**, a place of buying and selling things!

- The place that should have helped people **find** God had gradually become full of **obstacles** to finding God.

Jesus **passionately** wants us to find God, because he wants us to find **true satisfaction**.

Jesus wants our **friendship**, because the only place we can find the **fulfillment and satisfaction** we yearn for is in **communion with God**.

And he wants this for us so much, that sometimes he goes to **extreme measures** in order to cleanse the temple of our hearts.

Many times, this is why he permits **suffering** in our lives. He does not will it but he did permit it.

- When we suffer, we are **forced out of our comfort zone**;
- we learn our **limitations**;
- we discover that the promises of this world's politicians, advertisers, and self-help gurus **just don't hold up under pressure**.
- When that happens, we can become more **open** to hearing God's voice, to stop pretending that we don't really need God and start **leaning more completely** on God.

But Jesus doesn't want to have to resort to extreme measures **all the time**.

- And so, he gives us **another option**, an ongoing opportunity for us to **work with him** in cleansing out the temple of our hearts.
- It's called **confession**.
- The sacrament of reconciliation is a **voluntary cleansing of the temple**.

- As Christians, our **hearts** are the **real** temple of God - the Holy Spirit and the Blessed Trinity **dwell within** us.
- But our sins and selfish actions and habits can turn that temple into a place of **confusion**, **noise**, and **tension**, instead of one where we **encounter** God and discover his love.
- Whenever we make a good confession, we give Jesus **free entrance** into our hearts, so that he can **cleanse** them, and **fill them up** again with the light and strength of his friendship.

Jesus wants to lead us to the **meaning and fulfillment** we long for.

I close with St John of the Cross:

To reach satisfaction in all, desire satisfaction in nothing. To come to possess all, desire the possession of nothing. To arrive at being all, desire to be nothing. To come to the knowledge of all, desire the knowledge of nothing. To come to enjoy what you have not, you must go by a way in which you enjoy not. To come to the possession you have not, you must go by a way in which you possess not. To come to what you are not, you must go by a way in which you are not.

Galatians 6:14

But I will never brag about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of his cross, the world is dead as far as I am concerned, and I am dead as far as the world is concerned. (contemporary English standard)

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world. (Douy-Rheims)