

Fr Ryan Homily 3/3/2024

Read: Exodus 20:1-17; Psalm 19; 1 Corinthians 1:22-25; John 2:13-25

So there's a lot we could touch on in the gospel today but when I was sitting with it, something very simple but really important in what Jesus says got me thinking. Jesus could have said stop making this temple into a marketplace. He could have said stop making this house of prayer into a marketplace. Instead He says stop making my Father's house into a marketplace. Something really struck me about that this week, my Father's house. And there's a personalness to that, an intimacy, there's a familiarity that this place means something very special to Jesus. We can tell because He uses those words – my Father's house. If I were to reference my mom and dad's house I might think of the building itself and the rooms, the furniture, the décor but it holds a special place in my heart because it's my parent's home. It's where I grew up. I have memories attached to these different places in the house with my parents, my sister. My mom and dad still live there. I think it's the same thing here. You're doing these things in my Father's house. It's not just that God the Father owned this building, it's not special because it belongs to Him, it's special because His Dad lives there. This is where the Father dwells, that's what makes it so special. Now we don't need that temple anymore, Jesus predicted that it would be destroyed, and it's gone, it doesn't exist. Jesus is the new temple, we got that in the gospel today. He was talking about the temple of His body. Tear it down and in three days He will rebuild it. We get that. He dies on Good Friday; He rises on the third day. Jesus is the new temple. He is the Father's house. His body that was torn down and raised up. And of course where is the body of Jesus present now at this moment? Well that tabernacle behind me. The living body of Jesus. What that should mean is that the zeal which was consuming Jesus, the zeal for His Father's house consumed Him, now has to consume us for what's in there or who's in there. What was special about the old temple isn't gone even though that temple has been transferred right here. The zeal for Jesus' body, the eucharist, must consume us. So I've been thinking about a way for us to come at this, maybe to help us to understand that the beauty and also the gravity of all of this to bring us to the place where Jesus was in this gospel. That zeal would consume us and what I was thinking about was how words have weight. It says in the gospel today they came to believe His words because of the signs or even in the Psalm response, Lord your words are spirit and

life. And to think about do our words have weight? Cause we say a lot of things. Do we have a sense that our words actually mean something? Or when you give your word that it actually means something or is it just empty. I remember thinking about this, the TV show The Office. Michael Scott, great character, when he would walk into the office sometimes he would always say dot dot dot so help me God. It's how he would end what he was saying. And on The Office, and a lot of different places too, it always got me how often they would take the Lord's name in vain. It just kinda frivolously. It bothers me so much it would make me cringe cause it's actually a really big deal. It's actually in the first reading today, Exodus Chapter 20. The second commandment of 10 is thou shalt not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. And we do it almost like a knee-jerk response. And people will say when I point that out to them, they'll say well I didn't mean it. It just came out; I wasn't thinking about it. To which is say yes that's what in vain means. It means it was empty. There was nothing to it when there should have been. It means you don't mean it. So maybe words that we say don't mean a lot to us, they certainly mean a lot to God, they mean a lot for the church. Words have the power to change reality. That's what started it all off. You go back to the beginning, the beginning of Genesis. God says let there be light! And it happened. His word made it happen. Or in the church the words I take you as my wife, I take you as my husband. That moment two people stopped being two people and become one flesh. Words change reality. So often, so often in our lives our words carry a weight with them that we do not realize but we need to become aware. So in the very early church when it came to the mass, what's happening right now. That first and second generation of Christians wouldn't say that the priest said mass, they wouldn't say that he celebrated the mass, they would say the priest swore the mass because the mass is an oath to God. Everything said here has incredible weight to it and even to utter some of the words we say at mass means we're entering into that oath with God. This whole thing we're part of is a covenant oath where we are staking our lives on what we're doing here. So this first reading, Moses gives us the 10 commandments, right after this, right after this, it goes on to say that he slaughtered a lamb and sprinkled the people with it's blood. He covered them with it's blood and himself and the people said all that the Lord has said in those 10 commandments we will do. So that sprinkling of the blood was an oath. What they were saying is we will keep these 10 commandments or may what happened to that lamb happen to me. May my

blood be poured out if I don't keep this word. That's an oath that they were making. Moses responded by saying this is the blood of the covenant that's being sprinkled which the Lord has made with you. Okay that was then, this is now. Every mass the priest holds up the chalice, take this all of you and drink from it, this is the chalice of my blood. The blood of the new and eternal covenant. This is all about an oath. The new and eternal covenant is in the eucharist. In the old covenant it was the blood of an animal; Moses and the people had that blood on them. In the new covenant you get the blood in you even if you don't have the chalice. In the eucharist it's flesh, it's His body His blood. You get His blood in you. And not the blood of bulls and goats that was sacrificed in the old temple but the blood of the true and living Lamb of God. The Son of God, Jesus Himself. When we take that upon us we are swearing an oath. What that means is the little word that you say after the words the body of Christ are spoken to you, AMEN, has weight to it. When you come forward to receive Holy Communion and you hear the words the body of Christ, the word amen doesn't mean awe thanks. The word amen doesn't mean okay. The word amen doesn't mean I agree, it doesn't mean I believe. Amen means I stake my life on this. You're entering into an oath to the death. If I don't respect what I'm doing, may what happened to Jesus happen to me. Amen. It means find false to this let me be torn in two. What happened to those animals in the old covenant happen to me. What happened to Jesus let it happen to me. And that means every time we receive Holy Communion unworthily, not in the state of grace, that's the very thing that happens in our souls. We're tearing them apart. Words have weight. And this is why we would say please if you're not Catholic, if you're not part of the covenant, don't receive Holy Communion because you're not part of the covenant. You don't realize what you're taking upon yourself. Or if you are Catholic but you're guilty of some big deal sin, then please don't receive Holy Communion until you've been reconciled by confession. St Paul writes about this in 1 Corinthians, Chapter 10, he says this and it's amazing, he says this the cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? And the bread of Christ, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? And he goes on, he says you cannot drink the cup of the Lord and also the cup of demons. You can't be divided. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and then the table of demons. And he goes on in Chapter 11 to describe people who would do that, who would receive Holy Communion while in a state of serious sin without going to confession first? He

says this about them – this is the reason why many of you are getting sick, some of you are even dying. Because what happens when we take Jesus in the eucharist in our hands or on our tongues, we let the blood of the new covenant be poured into us. And if we are not being faithful to that in how we live our lives, we're saying let me be torn apart as Jesus was. The blood that I'm receiving, may my blood be spilled out as Jesus' was. And so people wonder why I keep coming to mass, I keep receiving communion, my faith isn't growing. But are you going to confession? You know there was a man, his name was Voltaire. He was a French philosopher, hated the Catholic church. At one point there was a young man who came up to Voltaire and asked I wanna be like you. I was raised Catholic, I wanna get away from the church without the burden of the church. I wanna sin but I still feel guilty about it. And you know what Voltaire said, he said that if you wanna kill your conscience do one thing, commit mortal sins and then go to Holy Communion. Because nothing will extinguish the light of God quicker, nothing will kill your conscience faster than committing mortal sin and receiving Holy Communion without going to confession first. And so last thing with this, bringing it full circle, taking the eucharist means I can't be divided, I can't belong to anyone else. In the gospel today Jesus goes into that temple, into His Father's house where sacrifice is offered up, a Holy place. But what had happened to it, it was divided. People had come in, let their greed rein, their desire for wealth take over, they'd given themselves over to something other than God. So what does Jesus do in His Father's house? He goes in and kicks them all out, He cleanses it. He says no this belongs to the Lord. It's divided and it shouldn't be, the temple is gonna be holy again. Question, who here is a temple of the Holy Spirit? Nobody, okay just checking. Everybody who's baptized is a temple of the Holy Spirit. That means you've been made holy, that means you've been made His. It means you've been brought into the covenant. You are a place where sacrifice happens. You are a place dedicated to the Lord. You are never to be divided again. But what happens so often is we equivocate. Maybe some time in the last week you let, rather than letting the Lord be the Lord, you let something else rein in you. You let something else take over. Well it's time to oath out of what you did. The word exorcism, it actually means to oath out. Something else has come into God's space, some sin, and it's raining. The word exorcism means to oath out. It's time to cast out the false God. The false God gets oathed out, the real God gets to win. The best most powerful exorcism we have is confession. Confession is actually a sacrament of

exorcism where you say I am oathing out whatever shouldn't be in here and I'm letting Christ win. So here's my invitation to you. First, maybe you realize you need to go to confession to oath out of that something other than God you've given your word to. And if it's a big deal sin, a mortal sin, go to confession before you receive Holy Communion. Where instead of God blessing you, you're cursing yourself by saying amen. Saying amen means bring death down upon me. The second thing is this, to never ever ever ever go to receive Holy Communion and when you hear the words the body of Christ to say amen in vain empty. Amen meaning okay. Amen meaning thank you. The word amen carries a weight to it. We're saying I stake my life on that. It's an oath to the death. The next time you receive Holy Communion, which should be in like twenty minutes, here the body of Christ and say amen and mean I stake my life on that. This is an oath. These are powerful words, and these words have weight. They change reality unless of course words don't mean anything.

Amen