**Reflection on the Sunday Readings**

**March 4, 2018 – Third Sunday of Lent**

**Exodus 20: 1-17 Psalm 19: 8-11 1 Corinthians 1: 22-23**

**John 2: 13-25**

*“God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might have eternal life.”*

Today’s Gospel Acclamation, John 3: 16, a passage familiar to most of us and often seen in such unlikely places as gatherings and sporting events, encapsulates the essence of the Gospel message as we continue in the Season of Lent. In the perfect union of divinity and humanity, Our Lord Jesus Christ reconciled us to the Father by his passion, death and resurrection. In the ultimate act of salvific love, Christ, the new Adam, brought about humanity’s “re-creation,” washing away the sin of Adam, by which men and women had been long estranged from God and their place in the eternal kingdom.

In today’s second reading from the First Letter to the Corinthians, Saint Paul reminds us of mankind’s ongoing search for salvation and the truth. To Paul and the disciples, Christ is the way to the truth, the way for which saints and martyrs and died throughout the centuries. Salvation is not through abstract principles or signs, but rather through the person of Jesus Christ, who offered himself for our redemption. As Saint Paul said:

*“Brothers and sisters: Jews demand signs and Greeks, look for wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, Jews and Greeks alike, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”*

The Gospel reading today offers Saint John’s account of Jesus driving the merchants and moneychangers out of the temple. It is a powerful account of Jesus’ zeal and passion for proper worship to the Father, and for such things to be unsullied by the strictures of human avarice. *“His disciples recalled the words of Scripture, ‘Zeal for your house will consume me.’”* He further identified himself and offered a sign of his resurrection with his additional words: *“Destroy this temple* [of his body], *and in three days I will raise it up.”* Christ in his person was the source and summit of salvation then, just as he is for us today in the Holy Eucharist.

As we continue our journey in the Season of Lent, we must keep our eyes focused on Christ. He is the eternal Word of God, the perfect lamb, and the spotless victim, by whose sacrifice we have been made whole. As we heard in today’s Responsorial Psalm: *“Lord, you have the words of everlasting life.”*

Deacon Steven K. Szmutko