

A NOTE TO PARENTS

In today's Gospel story, we see an angry Jesus—very different from the “gentle Jesus, meek and mild” of Victorian spirituality, and very different, also, from the supremely accepting and non-judgmental Jesus now in favor among many church people. We must believe that Jesus *loved* the merchants and traders in the Temple, and also the scribes and lawyers and Pharisees; but his encounters with them make it abundantly clear that he did *not* love them “just the way they are” in the sense of being satisfied with their actions and their spiritual state. He wanted them to *repent*. He wanted them to *change*.

Jesus' anger was directed first and foremost at those who abuse power, and who know God's ways but do not follow them. Clearly, such “hypocrites,” as he called them, are the bad guys in the Gospel, while the small, the weak and the helpless are in many ways the “good guys”—though they too are not without the need for repentance and redemption.

This is an important reminder for us. Parents and teachers have authority over children; children are constantly making mistakes, getting into trouble, bickering, making messes, dawdling, disregarding our instructions, and getting on our nerves. As we teach and admonish children, we may give them the idea that their inexperience, awkwardness, and lack of skill are what we mean by “sin.” This is particularly troubling to children if they are *trying really hard*, but still “mess up.”

The double meaning of the word “wrong” encourages this confusion. But “getting something wrong”—making a mistake, failing, falling short—no matter how bad, is not the same thing as “doing wrong,” or sinning. Children may feel terribly guilty for mere mistakes, immaturity, or limitations; adults often respond to children's shortcomings in ways that positively encourage that feeling of guilt. But children's limitations and failures, however maddening they often are, are not sins. *To sin is to know the good and refuse to do it.* Children do plenty of that along with their mistakes, but adults do it more. That's why it's so important for our children to see *us*, in church, on our knees, repenting and begging forgiveness.

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Year B
3rd SUNDAY
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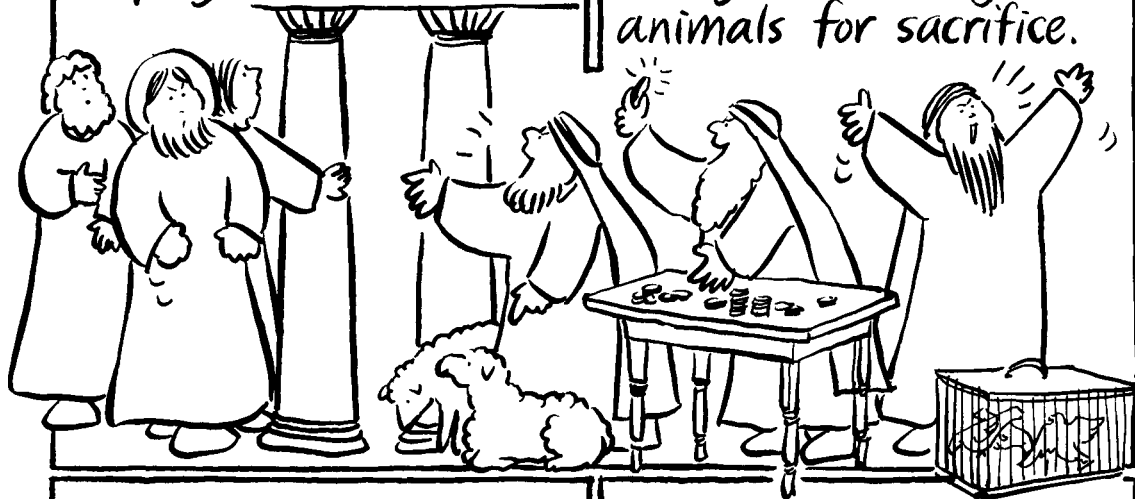
Jesus threw all the moneychangers
and animal sellers out
of the Temple!

JOHN 2:15



Jesus was in Jerusalem. He went to the Temple to pray to God.

The Temple was full of people who were trading money and selling animals for sacrifice.



It was noisy and smelly. Some of the sellers and traders were cheating the people who came to pray.

Jesus said, "Get all this out of here! The Temple is a place to pray!"



The people in Jerusalem knew that the Temple was for praying and praising God. But some people cared more about getting rich than praising God. Jesus made them leave the Temple.

We know that our lives are for loving God and doing his work. But we don't always do those things. We need Jesus to clear the ugliness and meanness out of our hearts. Lent is a time to **CLEANSE OUR HEARTS.**



What kind of things should Jesus sweep away from your heart? How can you help Jesus cleanse your heart?