**Reflection for Sunday in Third Week of Lent, 2015--“More Precious than Gold”**

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Readings: Exodus 1-17; Psalm 19:8-11; Corinthians 1:22-25; John 2:13-25.

**REFLECTION:**

In our reading from Exodus today we are reminded that God “delivered the Commandments” as a code for humanity for all times. In those ten statements, God stipulated obligations to Himself through exclusive worship (1-2) and by keeping holy the Sabbath (3); honoring our parents (4) as well as a catalog of forbidden social relationships and activities(5-10). We meet the harsh God who “punishes to the third and fourth generation” those who “hate” Him; and we meet the gentle God “who bestows mercy to the thousandth generation on the children of those who love me and keep my commandments”. We also hear God’s warning that He is a “jealous God” and desires that His people love and serve Him with fidelity and totality. God will not be in competition with material goods or earthly motives. The psalm response of “Lord, you have the words of eternal life” affirms the law of the Lord which is indeed perfect, generative, trustworthy, right, clear, enlightening, pure, eternal, true and “more precious than gold”.

Against that background, the Gospel presents a somewhat shocking scene at the Temple of Jerusalem, the holiest of holy places for the Jews. Artists in words and forms have memorialized the event by showing us an unfamiliar Jesus driving away the “entrepreneurs” with their doves and sacrificial animals, their commercial interests. The tables of the money changers, required by secular and religious law, are overturned. Jesus is fearless and imperious in his command: “Stop making my Father’s house a marketplace.” Financial gain cannot be the purpose of religious actions. A competing god is embraced when actions inappropriate in sacred places are carried on. In Jesus’s law, commercial interests cannot supersede the primary purpose of the temple. He must defend his Father’s rights. This dramatic cleansing of the temple area reinstates the priority of religious practice over monetary interests and portrays the Law as more precious than gold. It also may capture what Pope Francis describes as “waking up the world” by our witness to Christian values. Do you see these as connected?

**PRAYER:**

O God of Love and Justice, engrave deep in my heart your “words of eternal Life”. May I always consider your Law as your gift to me so that I may freely choose to love you. Keep me aware of your presence in the persons I meet each day and in all the events that make up my life. Help me to manage well the temple of my life and give me the courage to cleanse it of all that is not of your inspiration or will. I ask this in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.