

## **Jesus cleansing the Temple: A Call to ‘become temple’-Lent 3rd**

**Temple/Church** is a place that inspires us to pray. It reminds us of God and it’s a place where His presence can be experienced, where we find peace.

Jesus uses the term ‘temple’ to refer to his body. He always thought and spoke about the Father, and invited everyone who approached him to experience God, the Father. So, he lived as a temple, allowing and causing others to meet and experience the Father, his unconditional and saving love.

When such a purpose of the temple is damaged and forgotten, Jesus becomes furious and moves forward to clean it up. This what we see in today’s gospel. --We have a call *to build a church with our lives*; in other words, a call “to become temple”; to be a means, an instrument for others to see and experience the Father; a call “to become like Jesus”.

*? How many of you want to see our parish community flourishing?* How many of you want to see it merged, clustered, or closed, in 10/20 years?

Well, we all agree that we need to continue as a thriving parish community. That’s because we love our SBC community, you feel proud to be part of it; proud to support and strengthen it, through your generous ways of offering your time, talents and treasure. But, Is our parish declining? Are there more pews seemingly empty? Do we see many of the younger generation attending? What would happen when we are gone? These are some of the usual questions we may ask! Are there solutions? Do I feel to have some responsibility for this?

**Last week**, if you still remember, Deacon Joe reminded us of our chief obstacle: ‘my un-willingness’, ‘to pick the stones’, to remove the obstacle, “to be ready”. He invited you, ‘to walk together in faith’, in small groups, to make disciples.

B&S, for the past 50 years, our society has witnessed, what can arguably be called the most accelerated social change in human history. As we have moved through several paradigm shifts in the last generation, the pastoral practice of the Catholic church, mostly in the West remained for the most part, unchanged from what existed prior to this state of flux. Then, Culture supported church and attendance. Demographics supported our pastoral development. We just had to build the church and people would come.

I do not think we were particularly good at 'making disciples' 50 years ago. In a sense, we got away with not making disciples, because the culture propped it all up. But in this post-modern era resulted from the cultural revolution, today thousands of faithful believing Catholics carry the enormous burden of their children and grandchildren who have abandoned 'the faith'. Many Catholics carry the extra burden of blaming themselves for this situation, unsure of what they did wrong: after all, they did for their children, what their parents did for them.

Now, pointing the finger is pointless. The fact is that the rules have all changed. We no longer have the cultural props we had before, and the social current has turned against us. The only reasonable solution, going forward is to return to what Jesus asked of us, 2000 yrs ago. To not just make believers or 'practicing Catholics', but to **'MAKE DISCIPLES'**. That's it! This is the *heart of the matter*, and the lens through which we are to evaluate all activity of the church, all pastoral programs and expenditures, of our parish.

How to make disciples? A disciple is 'one who learns, who yearns to grow'. Here, you have an opportunity if you want to learn and grow. *God gives us **opportunities**: This is an irrepeatable opportunity*: They never return! If you miss it, it doesn't make sense to complain later. The 3 good reasons to join a "small group" are: foster personal relationship, build community, help forming missionary disciples... and that's it.

Jesus never walked or acted alone: He had 3/12, then 72; send them 2/2: It's a model. At St. Boni's, we have *trained 12 and commissioned them as 'apostles'. To be part of "a small group ministry that fosters personal relationships, builds community, provides formation to help parishioners grow as joyful missionary disciples of Christ."*

**Lent is the time**, the best time: To start small groups- with great flexibility and options; of time and place to meet, of themes to choose, of members. Who could be your group? -single men's groups -single women's group -young mothers' group -newly married couples' group -Retired men's group -Veteran's group- widow's group etc.

**Dear Friends, I want you not to miss this opportunity!** I want, you want, our shepherd archbishop Hebda wants, all parishioners to be member of a small group, not to walk alone, but together-in faith. Believe me, this is possible! God will bless your willingness, your desire to grow, and to 'remove the obstacle'. So that you can be 'ready like Abraham', you can fulfill the call 'to be a temple', and be an active agent of 'Making Disciples', to ensure the future and well bring of our loved St. Bonaventure parish Community. Amen.