

“Lent Reflections 2021: Third Sunday of Lent” an excerpt from Laurence Freeman OSB

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(Gospel Jn 2:13-25. *He was speaking of the sanctuary that was his body*).

One of the effects of the pandemic has been to expose corruption and the lies by which it smoke-screens itself, together with buried institutionalized injustices in national and global economic systems. What this pivotal scene of the life of Jesus [the cleansing of the temple] shows about him is the link he saw between individual and social sin. This is why it is so disturbing and dangerous. Institutionalized Christianity defended itself against it by interpreting the church as a perfect, incorruptible society. Its leaders were trained to cover up any evidence to the contrary. Until modern times the ‘perfidious Jews’, (as they continued to be called in the Roman missal until ended by John XXIII in 1962), were scapegoats easily used to maintain the facade of Christianity’s impeccability.

We know how to justify ourselves and avoid taking the blame for our mistakes. It is a reflex to whatever threatens our place in the power system of our private worlds. Times in

the desert – like the daily Lent of our meditation – are needed to teach us how to face the truth about ourselves. The mantra serves, more gently but just as effectively, the purpose of the whip. We know it is working when we can thank the Spirit for casting out these false traders from the temple of God that each of us is.

After meditation: “On the Mystery of the Incarnation” by Denise Levertov in *THE STREAM AND THE SAPPHIRE: Selected Poems on Religious Themes* (New York: New Directions, 1997), p. 19.

It's when we face for a moment
the worst our kind can do, and shudder to know
the taint in our own selves, that awe
cracks the mind's shell and enters the heart:
not to a flower not to a dolphin,
to no innocent form
but to this creature vainly sure
it and no other is god-like, God
(out of compassion for our ugly
failure to evolve) entrusts,
as guest, as brother,
the Word.

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