Voices of Sisters

Spirituality



"Enough of distorting Jesus' message by those who, deeming themselves successors in the line of the apostles, not only fail to act but also hinder others: Frustrated and embittered by an unlivable loneliness, they stifle initiatives and silence the voice of the Spirit in the body of Christ, which we all constitute": Sister Carmen Notario. (Photo: Pixabay)



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Upon receiving the tablets of the law and sealing the covenant with Yahweh, the people, on their pilgrimage to the promised land, regarded the ark containing the stones as holding the "presence of God himself."

When David decided to relocate the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, he did so with the intention of constructing a magnificent building to house it. The temple in Jerusalem was conceived as the dwelling place where Yahweh, the God of Israel, physically resided.

We know that the temple was razed to the ground on several occasions, and the presence of the Ark of the Covenant is no longer mentioned, possibly lost forever during the Babylonian siege. Herod the Great initiated expansion and embellishment works around 20 B.C., which had not been completed by the time of Jesus. During this period, the Gospel of John describes the ascent of Jesus to Jerusalem.

> "Women in the Church must not remain silent. Some of us bear witness, while others are victims of intolerable oppression": Sister Carmen Notario
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Arriving at the building presents us with a desolate panorama: The temple, the religious center and national symbol of Israel, converted into a place of commerce and exploitation.

"He found in the temple the sellers of oxen, sheep, and doves, and the money-changers set up, and making a scourge of cords, he drove them all out of the temple. And to the sellers of doves he said, 'Take these things away, and do not make my Father's house a house of business' " (John 2:14-16).

It would be relatively easy for me to comment on this passage based on the symbolism of the "scourge of cords" and what the "sheep" and "doves" mean. However, we would be left with an explanation of symbols."

We already know that Jesus establishes a new relationship between God and people and that he himself is the new temple. Because of him we do not need intermediaries for our relationship with God. We also understand that the sellers in the temple represent the hierarchy that exploited the poor with the fraud of the sacred and that money had become the god of the temple instead of the Father.

> "Enough of the desecration of the body, mind and spirit of countless women, girls and boys by those who believe they wield 'power' simply because they have been entrusted with a ministry meant for service": Sr. Carmen Notario
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"There are indeed sick individuals among us who sexually abuse women, men, girls, and boys. However, the peril of idolizing power and money is present in all of us": Sr. Carmen Notario. (Photo: Freepik)

The Ark of the Covenant was no longer in the temple, and as a result, the original purpose of the temple had been lost. The place, initially constructed to commemorate God's faithfulness, had devolved into a hub of commerce and exploitation of the poor, all in the name of God, as well as the people who had made a commitment to reciprocate God's faithfulness.

How could Jesus not feel angered by such a bleak picture? How could he have refrained from speaking out to the Jewish authorities, even though he was certain they would not understand him?

Are our temples today places of prayer and relationship with God?

It is not necessary to go back to the time of Jesus, but rather to read some of the headlines that have appeared in our newspapers in recent months. I am specifically referring to religious newspapers in the United States and Spain:

- A woman who claims she was spiritually and sexually abused by a famous Jesuit is demanding transparency;
- Training focused on grievance redressal infuses hope among Indian nuns;
- Franciscan Javier Garrido, condemned by the Church to leave "all ministerial and pastoral practice" for abusing two nuns;
- The Diocese of Plasencia "temporarily" removes the priest involved in narcotics trafficking;
- Australia: Church deems allegations of sexual abuse against bishop as "very worrying."

> "Just as Jesus regarded our body, mind, and spirit as a sacred temple, we [the women of the Church] demand full participation in decisions that impact both the local and universal community!": Sr. Carmen Notario
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Enough of the desecration of the body, mind and spirit of countless women, girls and boys by those who believe they wield 'power' simply because they have been entrusted with a ministry meant for service, not to be 'served'.

Enough of distorting Jesus' message by those who, deeming themselves successors in the line of the apostles, not only fail to act but also hinder others: Frustrated and embittered by an unlivable loneliness, they stifle initiatives and silence the voice of the Spirit in the body of Christ, which we all constitute.

How much longer must we endure such humiliation, pain, and frustration?

"Passion for your house will consume me."

No, brothers, do not be misled; do not patronize us, and do not hide behind the notion that these are isolated cases. There are indeed sick individuals among us who sexually abuse women, men, girls and boys. However, the peril of idolizing power and money is present in all of us. Equally troubling is the "namby-pamby" conformism of those who avert their gaze or attempt to "calm the waters," concealing their mediocrity and lukewarmness.

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Women in the Church must not remain silent. Some of us bear witness, while others are victims of intolerable oppression. Just as Jesus regarded our body, mind, and spirit as a sacred temple, we demand full participation in decisions that impact both the local and universal community!

The action of Jesus described in this passage is violent. The confrontation with the Jewish authorities could not be harsher. They have usurped the place of God and exploit the temple for personal enrichment, wielding a power they've granted to themselves.

—"What sign do you present to us for doing these things?" (John 2:18) Jesus answered them:

—"Suppress this sanctuary, and in three days I will raise it up." (John 2:19)

"He [Jesus] was referring to the sanctuary of his body." (John 2:21)

When the truth becomes inconvenient, the simplest solution is to remove the person. Jesus, right from the start of his mission, was becoming undesirable. He called for a radical change of mind and heart.

What is true conversion, the "metanoia," the change of mind and heart to which we are invited this Lent?

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This story appears in the **Lent** feature series. View the full series.