

One day a man is driving without his seatbelt when he spots a police car right behind him. He grabs for the belt and puts it on. It is too late, however, and the red lights of the police car begin to flash.

'You weren't wearing your seatbelt,' says the officer.

'Yes I was,' replies the man, 'and if you don't believe me, ask my wife.'

The officer looks at the man's wife and asks, *'Was he wearing his seatbelt, ma'am?'*

'Officer,' she begins, 'I've been married to this man for forty years, and there's one thing I've learned: Never to argue with him when he's been drinking!'

Jesus manifests different like of *spirits* in today's Gospel. His action is not easily understood by his disciples, the church leaders, or by many of us. We don't often hear that **Jesus** is angry enough to make a whip and to become disruptive. Maybe it will help if we compare our first reading from **Exodus** with the gospel story from **John**.

The **Hebrews** - in our first reading - who are recently **freed** from slavery, are looking for **guidance**. They need **structure** so that they can **practice** a way of life that is both new and strange to them. They - for the first time - are not subject to the **whims** of people who have the **power** to **subject** them. They are **free**, as **God** is **free**.

It is a **freedom** to live, love, and relate with themselves and with others as **God** lives, loves and relates. The **Ten Commandments** are offered to them, then, as a **means** by which they can

practice living, loving and relating in a very new way.

Whenever we begin something **new**, it initially feels **awkward**. We hesitate. We make **mistakes**. We need **instruction** and **encouragement**. It takes a **willingness** to **learn** from our **mistakes**, and a learned discipline to **practice** repeatedly. Yet - for most of us - unless we **enjoy** the new endeavor or we can **see** the potential benefit, we tend not to **practice**. If, for example, we don't **enjoy** or **see** the benefit of reading, we generally **resist practicing** reading, and our ability to read **stagnates**.

When we **practice**, we gradually arrive in a place where we **internalize** what we have been **practicing**. Our **practice** stops being **external**, and starts being more of an **internal reality** or **authority**.

The **Gospel** writer, **John**, uses this event of **Jesus** angrily driving out people and animals from the **Temple** to help us see the difference. Some of the **Jewish** leaders - in the story - are operating primarily **externally**. They look to **justify** their point-of-view by making reference to **external authority** - such as the **Ten Commandments** - exclusively. **Jesus** - on the other hand - finds his **authority** from **within** himself. The **difference** can be found - the **Gospels** reveal - is his **practicing** living the **freedom** of **God** to **create** us in **God's** own image. This encourages **Jesus** to **trust** himself, to **observe** rather than **judge** or **condemn**, and **helps** him to **know** that he is **connected** with **God**

and all of creation. When asked therefore by what **authority** he drives people and animals out of the **Temple**, he replies that he **knows** that he cannot be **hurt**. He is part of a **reality** that stretches into **eternity**. *So are we.*