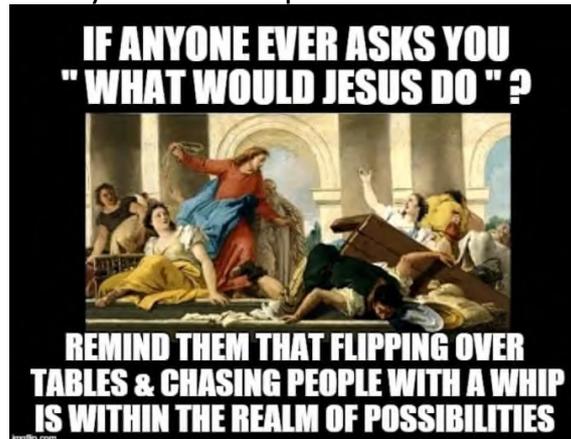




My Dear Brothers and Sisters,
A friend recently shared this picture with me:



It's a reminder that we don't always have a clear view of what Jesus would do. We often think of Jesus as a "nice guy," but that image often removes the strength of Jesus. Jesus, as God is absolutely loving and kind, but not always "nice," as today's Gospel points out. When I think of the zeal of Jesus for His Father's house, and how he manifests His anger, I'm always reminded of a scene in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, by C. S. Lewis. The four children have just met the Beavers in Narnia and are discussing the great lion: Aslan. Lucy, finding out Aslan is a lion, says,

"Then he isn't safe?"

"Safe?" said Mr. Beaver; "Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."

Jesus is *good*! He loves us too much to leave us in our evil and brokenness. As He cleanses the Temple today, we see the love He has for His people: the one place Gentiles could go to worship the One true God, was made a marketplace which did not allow for prayer. We see this also in the first reading, as it recounts the giving of the Ten Commandments. No longer is God distant, one who doesn't care about how we live; rather, He is close, and desires our happiness. Remember that the Commandments of God are about bringing us happiness, if only we trust in God as a loving, providential Father. The Commandments bring freedom, as we now know how best to live, how to become the *best-version-of-ourselves*.

We sometimes forget that the things of God are worth fighting for, worth dying for. I read a quote recently that made reference to Karl Marx's famous quote ("Religion... is the opiate of the masses") stating that if it is an opiate why is it that instead of putting people to sleep, Christianity creates martyrs.

You see, Jesus demands something of our lives – He is not a "tame lion". The fire of His love calls us out of our mediocrity. As we come to know God more, to be immersed in His love, we find that we so want to give ourselves over for Him. This is what love stirs up in the human heart!

In this world that tries to tell us that God needs to be on the peripheries, we can easily lose sight of the power of the Gospel – the power it has to change our lives, to bring us healing, to give us fire and life, to set us free from evil. To remove the strength of Jesus – to make Him a "nice guy" – is to remove His ability to protect us from evil, to die for us, to break the power of evil and addiction in our lives. May we never try to tame this lion or think that Jesus was merely a nice guy, but, rather, be ready to give ourselves wholly over this unsafe, but *good* God.