

GOSPEL

John 2:13-22

Just before the Jewish Passover Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and in the Temple he found people selling cattle and sheep and pigeons, and the money changers sitting at their counters there. Making a whip out of some cord, he drove them all out of the Temple, cattle and sheep as well, scattered the money changers' coins, knocked their tables over and said to the pigeon-sellers, "Take all this out of here and stop turning my Father's house into a market." Then his disciples remembered the words of scripture: Zeal for your house will devour me. The Jews intervened and said, "What sign can you show us to justify what you have done?" Jesus answered, "Destroy this sanctuary, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this sanctuary: are you going to raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking of the sanctuary that was his body, and when Jesus rose from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture and the words he had said.

HOMILY OF ST JOHN PAUL II

9 November 1985 (Excerpt, translated from Italian)

"God is in his Church - Let us adore the Lord in his holy dwelling place . . ."

The Lateran Basilica, as the Pope's cathedral, is the most important episcopal see of all: "omnium urbis et orbis Ecclesiarum mater et caput." ("mother and leader of all the Churches of the City and the World.") It was built by Emperor Constantine around 320, in the period following the great persecutions. Its dedication, initially to the Most Holy Savior and later in the Middle Ages also to Saints John the Baptist and John the Evangelist, and historical records speak of the great influx of faithful who flocked to this church. The solemnity of the local church of Rome was later extended to all dioceses precisely because of its title as "mother and leader of all the Churches of the City and the World."

Therefore today's feast takes on a profound theological-dogmatic value, because it clearly highlights that the Christian communities, who gather in churches to listen to the word of God and to offer the Eucharistic sacrifice, are on the authentic path of Truth to the

extent that they are in doctrinal and disciplinary communion with the one whom Christ himself placed at the foundation of the Church, Peter, and his successors.

The readings of the Mass of Dedication offer the opportunity for other considerations, equally important for Christian life: in fact, they speak of the "spiritual temple" of the soul, the "mystical temple" of the Church and the "material temple" which is the sacred building.

In his conversation with the Samaritan woman, Jesus reminds us that each of us must worship God with our thoughts, as rational beings, in the temple of our own soul: "The hour is coming," Jesus says, "when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (Jn 4:23-24). Thus, with his divine authority, Jesus teaches that God is pure spirit, immense and omnipresent, and that therefore he must be worshiped always and everywhere, with sincerity of feeling and consistency of life.

But there is another temple even more sublime, and it is the soul in "grace" which, redeemed by Christ, has received Baptism, and thus participating in the very life of the Holy Trinity, forms the "mystical temple" of the Church, which St. Paul also defines as a "mystical body," of which each is a qualified and dynamic member. Addressing Christians, St. Peter writes: "You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pt 2:5).

There is therefore another temple, "mystical" and that is, mysterious, but real, built through each individual believer, who, as a "living stone," participates in the priesthood of Christ with the indelible "character" received in Baptism and Confirmation and has the mission to offer "spiritual sacrifices pleasing to God," that is, to transform every commitment and every work in earthly realities and in the structures of history into an act of adoration and love!

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Dear faithful! Here lies our greatness and dignity! You – as St. Peter says again – are “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people.” Nothing is more sublime and nothing more demanding, because you must necessarily cling to Christ, the “living stone,” unfortunately “rejected” by many, and yet “chosen and precious in God’s sight,” and you must proclaim “the wonderful works of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9).

Finally, there is the “material temple,” that is, the sacred building, the “house of God,” consecrated to him alone, as a place dedicated solely to prayer, adoration, the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice, silence, and personal and communal recollection. This is what the first reading recalls, reporting King Solomon’s prayer before the altar, before the entire assembly of Israel: “Hear the prayer that your servant offers in this place. Hear the plea of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray in this place... Hear and forgive!” (1 Kings 8:29-30). Undoubtedly, as we have said, God is pure spirit, and must be worshiped “in spirit and truth”: every soul in grace is a temple of the Spirit, and every home must be a small church, in which one prays and adores.

But, in function of the real Eucharistic presence of Jesus, both during the sacrifice of the Mass and after the sacrifice in the tabernacle, God himself chooses for himself a special place, the sacred building, solely dedicated to mystical dialogue with him. Today’s liturgy therefore exhorts us to reflect on the importance of the church in the Christian community: it is the centre of faith and communion; it is the place where Christians know one another and find themselves as brothers on the journey towards the eternal homeland; it is a common home, which must be loved, respected, honored, because here God speaks to souls, forgives sins, accepts the Eucharistic sacrifice, unites everyone in a fervent yearning for charity and solidarity. Here, adoring Jesus present, everyone can make their own the ardent prayer of King Solomon: “You keep covenant and mercy with your servants, who walk before you with all their heart . . . Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant raises to you today!” (1 Kings 8:23-28). Therefore, love your parish church, attend it every Sunday and feast day for Holy Mass, and in the whirlwind of daily existence may it also be for you an oasis of peace and serenity, where in intimate conversation with God the spirit is enlightened and refreshed for the daily toil.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?



Head: Why do you think Jesus reacted so strongly in the Temple, and what does that reveal about how seriously God takes the holiness of what belongs to Him — including our own souls as “living temples”?



Heart: When you hear that you are a temple of the Holy Spirit, what stirs within you? How might your inner “temple” need cleansing or renewal so that it becomes a truer dwelling place for God?



Hands: How could you show greater reverence this week — in prayer, in church, or in daily life — for God’s presence within you and among His people?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (for example, “Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray”)
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others’ prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the ‘Glory Be’.