



LIVING THE GOSPEL



The Dedication of the Lateran Basilica November 9th 2025

Theme: "Then his disciples remembered the words of scripture: Zeal for your house will devour me"

Gathering Prayer

All: O God, who from living and chosen stones prepare an eternal dwelling for your majesty, increase in your church the spirit of grace you have bestowed, so that by new growth your faithful people may build up the heavenly Jerusalem. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: John 2: 13-22

¹³ Just before the Jewish Passover Jesus went up to Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and in the Temple he found people selling cattle and sheep and pigeons, and the money changers sitting at their counters there. ¹⁵ 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 ¹⁶ and said to the pigeon-sellers, 'Take all this out of here and stop turning my Father's house into a market'.

¹⁷ Then his disciples remembered the words of scripture: Zeal for your house will devour me. ¹⁸ The Jews intervened and said, 'What sign can you show us to justify what you have done?' ¹⁹ Jesus answered, 'Destroy this sanctuary, and in three days I will raise it up'. ²⁰ The Jews replied, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this sanctuary: are you going to raise it up in three days?' ²¹ But he was speaking of the sanctuary that was his body, ²² 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.

Gospel Focus

In this gospel, Jesus demonstrates the importance of a physical house of worship. Its abuse is the cause of his famous act of religious anger, when his full humanity was on display. At the same time, though, he shows us the ultimate unimportance of such places; they will not be needed in God's kingdom, when all the world contains the fullness of God's presence and all of life is lived liturgically, given as an offering to God. When he talks about "the temple" being destroyed and raised up, Jesus is not referring to the literal temple before him but to his own body. It is his body, his presence, that makes a place sacred and that will endure long after the world as we know it is gone.

Gospel Reflection

Today's gospel reading invites us into a deeper reflection on the meaning of *church*.

Most Catholics are probably unaware that the Basilica of St John Lateran, Not Saint Peter's, is the seat of the Pope. Historically, the church played a larger role than it does now, but it is still one of four major basilicas in Rome. The original church building was dedicated in 324, on property given to the bishop of Rome by Constantine. Additionally, the Lateran Palace was the official residence of the Pope until the office moved to Avignon.

John's account of this gospel episode is located at the beginning of the gospel, rather than near the end as in the Synoptics. Jesus drives the money-changers and merchants out of the temple area, saying that they were making a market place out of the Father's house. Animal merchants and money-changers were necessary for temple function, providing the means for animal sacrifice.

However, the temple ground was not to be the place for that-even in the outer Court of the Gentiles, where they had likely set up shop. To be holy is to be *set apart*. The temple, of all places, was to be dedicated to the worship of God, a space for all people, and the noisiness of bartering crowds was an obstacle to prayer. Whether grand and ornate (like the Lateran Basilica

) or intimate and humble, do our places of worship illuminate their function? Moreover, do we by our actions in these sacred spaces reflect the love of Christ in whose presence we stand?

Perhaps more importantly, Jesus' decisive action also ushers us beyond the temple itself. Following this shocking disturbance in the gospel scene, the Judeans want an answer from Jesus. "What sign can you show us for doing this?" Jesus responds, "Destroy this temple and in three days, I will raise it up." As he often does, Jesus speaks on a plane that his listeners are not expecting. Jesus, in fact, has offered a sign. Pointing beyond the temple, the place in which God dwells, Jesus offers his own body as the dwelling place of God. Likewise, by the gift of his body and blood as the Eucharist for us, Jesus calls forth and builds up the church, the Mystical Body of Christ. Jesus rises from the dead, and so does "rebuild the temple" in three days, but he also sends forth the Holy Spirit so that we ourselves might become temples of the living God.

The Second Vatican Council's *Lumen Gentium* reminds us, "The society structured with hierarchical organs and the Mystical Body of Christ are not to be considered as two realities, nor the earthly church and the church enriched with heavenly things; rather they form one complex reality which coalesces from a divine and a human element." The church is neither simply a building nor a community of worshippers nor a collection of beliefs and truths but a mystery in the deepest sense-a mystery that we as children of God are invited to receive and become in the gift of the Eucharist. Celebrating this dedication today, may we remember not only the sacredness of our places of worship but of our own sacredness as the church, the dwelling place of God.

Old/New Testament and CCC links

First Reading – Ezek 47: 1-2, 8-9, 12

¹ He brought me back to the entrance of the Temple, where a stream came out from under the Temple threshold and flowed eastwards, since the Temple faced east. The water flowed from under the right side of the Temple, south of the altar. ² He took me out by the north gate and led me right round outside as far as the outer east gate where the water flowed out on the right-hand side.

⁸ He said, 'This water flows east down to the Arabah and to the sea; and flowing into the sea it makes its waters wholesome. ⁹ Wherever the river flows, all living creatures

teeming in it will live. Fish will be very plentiful, for wherever the water goes it brings health, and life teems wherever the river flows.

¹² Along the river, on either bank, will grow every kind of fruit tree with leaves that never wither and fruit that never fails; they will bear new fruit every month, because this water comes from the sanctuary. And their fruit will be good to eat and the leaves medicinal.

Responsorial Reading – Ps 46:2-3, 5-6, 8-9

R: There is a river whose streams refresh the city of God, and it sanctifies the dwelling of the Most High. (R)

God is our shelter, our strength, ever ready to help in time of trouble, so we shall not be afraid when the earth gives way, when mountains tumble into the depths of the sea. **(R)**

There is a river whose streams refresh the city of God,
and it sanctifies the dwelling of the Most High. God is inside the city,
she can never fall, at crack of dawn God helps her. **(R)**

Yahweh Sabaoth is on our side, our citadel, the God of Jacob! Come, think of Yahweh's marvels, the astounding things he has done in the world. **(R)**

Second Reading – 1 Cor 3: 9c-11, 16-17

⁹ We are fellow workers with God; you are God's farm, God's building. ¹⁰ By the grace God gave me, I succeeded as an architect and laid the foundations, on which someone else is doing the building. Everyone doing the building must work carefully. ¹¹ For the foundation, nobody can lay any other than the one which has already been laid, that is Jesus Christ.

¹⁶ Didn't you realise that you were God's temple and that the Spirit of God was living among you? ¹⁷ If anybody should destroy the temple of God, God will destroy him, because the temple of God is sacred; and you are that temple.

Catechism of The Catholic Church

583. Like the prophets before him Jesus expressed the deepest respect for the Temple in Jerusalem. It was in the Temple that Joseph and Mary presented him forty days after his birth. At the age of twelve he decided to remain in the Temple to remind his parents that he must be about his Father's business. He went there each year during his hidden life at least for Passover. His public ministry itself was patterned by his pilgrimages to Jerusalem for the great Jewish feasts.

584. Jesus went up to the Temple as the privileged place of encounter with God. For him, the Temple was the dwelling of his Father, a house of prayer, and he was angered that its outer court had become a place of commerce. He drove merchants out of it because of jealous love for his Father: "You shall not make my Father's house a house of trade. His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.'" After his Resurrection, his apostles retained their reverence for the Temple

586. Far from having been hostile to the Temple, where he gave the essential part of his teaching, Jesus was willing to pay the Temple-tax, associating with him Peter, whom he had just made the foundation of his future Church. He even identified himself with

the Temple by presenting himself as God's definitive dwelling-place among men. Therefore his being put to bodily death presaged the destruction of the Temple, which would manifest the dawning of a new age in the history of salvation: "The hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father."

994. But there is more. Jesus links faith in the resurrection to his own person: "I am the Resurrection and the life." It is Jesus himself who on the last day will raise up those who have believed in him, who have eaten his body and drunk his blood. Already now in this present life he gives a sign and pledge of this by restoring some of the dead to life, announcing thereby his own Resurrection, though it was to be of another order. He speaks of this unique event as the "sign of Jonah," the sign of the temple: he announces that he will be put to death but rise thereafter on the third day.

Sharing and Discussion

1. If you have a long-distance move in your lifetime, how did you find a new place of worship? What makes a place meaningful for you?
2. What does it mean to you when St Paul claims that you are a temple of God and a dwelling of the Holy Spirit? How can you live your life to make that reality more apparent?

Closing Prayer

All: God of justice, we know that you hear the prayers of your people because we are the Body of your Son on earth. May you hear our prayers this day and fulfil the needs of your people and your world. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen.