

Scripture Study

Feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica in Rome



Opening prayer

Ezekiel 47:1-2, 8-9, 12

(Psalm 46:2-3, 5-6, 8-9)

1 Cor. 3:9c-11, 16-17

John 2:13-22

Overview of the Gospel:

- In today's Gospel, which takes place soon after Jesus' first public miracle in Cana (John 2:1-11), Jesus is in Jerusalem with his disciples for the Passover (verse 13).
- In the outer court of the Temple, called the Court of the Gentiles, Jesus observes the area is full of money-changers and sellers of sacrificial animals. The money-changers were necessary because the Temple tax (Exodus 30:11-17) could not be paid or animals be bought with Roman coins containing pagan images.
- Jesus, however, is grieved by the circus atmosphere surrounding these activities marked by noisy commotion, animals (and their manure), dishonest trading, and general lack of reverence for God's house which prevented Gentiles from using the area for what it was intended—a place to come to know the God of Israel.
- Jesus takes matters into his own hands and in the process is challenged by the Temple authorities in the first of many confrontations to come.

Questions:

- In the first reading, what is the temple symbolic for? And in light of that interpretation, what is the water coming from the temple symbolic for? What are the qualities of the water, and what are its effects? How is the Psalm related to the first reading?
- Looking at the second reading, what (or who) is the foundation of your life? What are you building on that foundation? At the end of your life, will your efforts prove durable? In what condition (physically, intellectually, and spiritually) is your "temple of the Holy Spirit"?
- Why does Jesus expel the money-changers and "cleanse" the Temple (Malachi 3:1ff; Matthew 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-17; Luke 19:45-46)? Are the money-changers and sellers wrong for selling—or wrong for the *manner* and *location* of their activity? As one of the sellers, how would you feel about Jesus' actions? As one of the disciples how would you feel? What did they eventually learn (verse 21)?
- How is Jesus challenged by the Temple authorities (verse 18)? Why? What is his response and what effect does it have on them?
- In verse 17, Jesus quotes Psalm 69:10. How does this verse apply to you? How are you zealous for God's house? What forms does this take?
- Early Church writers saw Jesus' actions as driving out a lack of discipline and a herd of earthly attachments. What attachments do you have that Jesus might want to drive out of your heart?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 583--586

Closing prayer

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings found in the bulletin!

"...Jesus, the Anointed of God, always begins by reforming abuses and purifying from sin; both when he visits his Church [Temple], and when he visits the Christian soul." -- Origen, *Homily on St. John*, 1

"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up"

Scripture: John 2:13-22

13 The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers at their business. 15 And making a whip of cords, he drove them all, with the sheep and oxen, out of the temple; and he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. 16 And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; you shall not make my Father's house a house of trade." 17 His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for thy house will consume me." 18 The Jews then said to him, "What sign have you to show us for doing this?" 19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 20 The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" 21 But he spoke of the temple of his body. 22 When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.

Meditation: What can keep us from the presence of God? Jesus' dramatic cleansing of the temple was seen by his disciples as a prophetic sign of God's action. The temple was understood as the dwelling place of God among his people. When God delivered his people from slavery in Egypt, he brought them through the sea,



and finally to Mount Sinai where he made a covenant with them and gave them a new way of life embodied in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17). God gave Moses instruction for worship and for making the Tabernacle, or tent of meeting, which was later replaced by the temple. The New Testament tells us that these "serve as a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary" – God's Temple in heaven (Hebrews 8:5). Jesus' cleansing of the temple is also a prophetic sign of what he wants to do with each of us. He ever seeks to cleanse us of sin and make us living temples of his Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). Do you want to be holy as God is holy?

Jesus referred to the temple as his Father's house which was being made into "house of trade" (John 2:16) or "den of robbers" (Mark 11:17). That is why he used physical force to expel the money-changers. The prophecy of Malachi foretold the coming of the Lord unexpectedly to his Temple to "purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, till they present right offerings to the Lord" (Malachi 3:1-4). Jesus' disciples recalled the words of Psalm 69: "Zeal for your house will consume me."

This was understood as a Messianic prophecy. Here the disciples saw more clearly Jesus as the Messiah who burned with zeal for God's house. The Jewish authorities, however, wanted proof that Jesus had divine authority to act as he did. They demanded a sign from God to prove Jesus right, otherwise, they would treat him as an imposter and a usurper of their authority. Jesus replied that the sign God would give would be Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection from the tomb: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews did not understand that the temple Jesus referred to was his own body. The "tent of his body" had to be destroyed to open the way to the presence of God for us. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus not only reconciles us with God, but he fills us with his Holy Spirit and makes us temples of the living God (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). God's word enlightens our minds and purifies our hearts that we may offer God fitting worship and enjoy his presence both now and forever. Do you burn with zeal for the Lord's house?

"Lord Jesus Christ, you open wide the door of your Father's house and you bid us to enter confidently that we may worship in spirit and truth. Help me to draw near to your throne of mercy with gratitude and joy."

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