

9 November – Dedication of St. John Lateran A – B – C

First Reading Ezekiel 47:1-2.8-9.12

The angel brought me 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. 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.

He said, "This water flows east down to the Arabah and to the sea; and flowing into the sea it makes its waters wholesome. 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. 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."

Second Reading 1 Corinthians 3:9c-11.16-17

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

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.

Meditation

At the time of his conversion the Emperor Constantine gave to the Bishop of Rome the Lateran Basilica, a meeting hall on the Coelian Hill in Rome. Legend has it that on November 9, 324, this basilica was dedicated to the Most Holy Saviour. The baptistery of the basilica was dedicated to St. John the Baptist, and in the middle ages the entire basilica was rededicated in his honour.

This basilica remains to this day the cathedral church of Rome and thus a monument of great importance to the Western Church. Like all feasts of dedication, this is a feast of the Lord and thus displaces the Sunday celebration in ordinary time. God has always sought to dwell among his people. No building made by human hands can really contain him. There were sanctuaries made by human hands, those first sanctuaries where the stammering faith of the patriarchs discovered with dread that God was there; that tent of meeting which fluttered in the desert wind when Moses conversed there with God face to face; and finally the temple of Jerusalem which fixed the presence of the Lord Sabaoth among his people. Very soon, however, despite their attachment to Jerusalem, the prophets were struggling to liberate the chosen people from a false sense of security. They had come to believe that the presence of God was guaranteed by a stone building. It is rather in the hearts of a faithful people that God wants to dwell. By faithfully frequenting the temple, Jesus shows himself to be the worthy successor of those who love the Lord and seek his presence.

His teaching about the "Father's house" prepares for a new order where the ancient cultic sanctuaries give way to his own person. With the death of Jesus, the veil of the sanctuary is torn. The true sanctuary is now the Body of Christ, the community of believers. The churches made by human hands will now be at the service of this community.