

HOMILY FOR THE DEDICATION OF ST JOHN LATERAN

1. Unusual Sunday on calendars – instead of 32nd Sunday in Ordinary time, we celebrate a church
 - a. Might wonder why celebration of the dedication of a church more important than continuity of gospel
 - b. interrupt gospel of Matthew for John about Jesus cleansing the temple
 - c. This gospel gives us a clue about why this feast is so important
 - d. Not so much money-changers He is angry but what they symbolize
2. Temple was the house of God
 - a. It was the place where one went to pray and to worship God
 - b. Custom of offering sacrifice began to take over worship
 - c. A person had to bring a sacrifice to worship God
 - d. Then you had to buy an animal for the sacrifice
 - e. Soon you had to have special kind of money to buy these animals
 - f. What had begun as a service to help people in their worship was becoming an obstacle
 - g. Instead of a place for prayer and worship God the temple was becoming a marketplace
3. Jesus is angry that people are not free to simply be in the presence of God,
 - a. commerce is blocking access to God
 - b. When he chases out the moneychangers, He is proclaiming that all should have free access to God
 - c. Jesus is challenged by the authorities: what sign gives you the right to challenge the custom
 - d. Jesus makes the mysterious statement: destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up
 - e. John testifies that Jesus is not speaking of the Jewish temple but of the temple of His body
4. Later in the gospel of John when Jesus speaks to the Samaritan woman at the well
 - a. He announces that the time is coming when people will not worship at a temple
 - b. Rather they will worship in spirit and truth
 - c. Jesus here too is pointing to the Resurrection, when His body will no longer be limited by time and space
 - d. Through the power of His Spirit Jesus transforms all who believe into His Body
5. St. Paul is even more explicit that there is a new temple

- a. As he writes to the Corinthians: you are the temple of God
 - b. Paul says he laid a foundation by proclaiming good news of Jesus love and sacrifice
 - c. Others have built on this foundation as long as they are faithful to gospel of Jesus
 - d. Paul builds on this, do you not know that you are the temple of God
 - e. The Spirit of God is dwelling within us
 - f. Because we are God's dwelling place, his temple we are holy
6. Natural question arises if we are God's temple why do we need a church, a building dedicated to God
- a. Can't we pray anywhere
 - b. Importance of a church is that it is like a home
 - c. We do not need a home to survive, any kind of shelter can protect our bodies from elements
 - d. But there is a psychological and spiritual drive within us to find a place we can call home
 - i. A place where we are comfortable and identify with as being ours
 - ii. May not spend a lot of time in it, but somehow it is our center
7. Body of Christ could survive by coming together anywhere to pray and celebrate their holiness
- a. Just as we have an individual need to have a place we can call home
 - b. So does the Body of Christ
 - c. Deep instinct in every group of Christians that sees itself as dwelling of Christ, we need a home
 - d. We need a place where we can freely acknowledge and celebrate the presence of God within us
 - e. Individual churches become the home that represents the local Body of Christ to the community
8. Importance of St. John Lateran is that it is the cathedral church of Rome
- a. Rome is important because the founders of the Church saw Rome as the ideal place to spread the good news of Jesus
 - b. Peter and Paul came to Rome to preach and both were martyred there
 - c. Because of this Rome historically became the center of the Christian faith
 - d. The bishop of Rome became the symbol of unity representing the entire Body of Christ on earth at this time
 - e. Just as the local church is the home for this portion of the Body of Christ
 - f. St. John Lateran represents the portion of the Body of Christ that is still on its journey of faith