

Homily by Fr. Alberic

Today we celebrate the feast of the dedication of the Basilica of St. John Lateran. The Basilica of St. John Lateran is the cathedral of Rome. It was built in the time of Emperor Constantine and was consecrated by Pope Sylvester in 324. This feast has become a universal celebration and has come to be known as the "Mother and Mistress of all churches of Rome and the world" as a sign of love and union with the See of Peter. It is a symbol of the unity of all Catholics who are spread throughout the whole world. Many people know that there are various divisions within the Catholic Church. However, in spite of differences, we can peacefully coexist, then, we can present to the world a paradigm of unity.

Undoubtedly, those churches that contain the Most Holy Eucharist are special houses of God on earth, but these are not the most important places of God in the world. We might look for God's presence in another way. Not just around us or surrounding us but also deep within each of us. The Church is not the great buildings that we Catholics have built over the centuries. St. Augustine told his people: "The Church is the people. These are the living stones which build the temple of God." Each of us is a Temple of the Holy Spirit. We can gaze into ourselves with awe and say, "This is the holy dwelling of the Most High." As St. Paul says in the second reading: "You are God's building...Are you not aware that you are the temple of God and that the spirit of God dwells in you?"

The message, then, is clear. Christ is to be found most potently not only in the cathedrals we build, but also in the Christian life that we lead. Since we are the Temple of the Holy Spirit we, too are in need of cleansing as Christ cleanses the temple, because we will be deceived, no matter how great of a progress we make in the spiritual life, if we think that there is nothing more in us that has to be removed. Our tragedy is that we allow the sheep and oxen of our passions and worldly desires to be mingled with our worship of God in the temple of our heart.

Our God wants to unite us to Himself; God wants us to be cleansed, purified-to become like Him. God became human so that humans might become divine. This process of divinization, of being made divine is quite painful at times. Self-knowledge can hurt. I did that. I said that. My gosh. Some wisdom masters speak of growth as a process of successive disillusionment.

God is working in us the painful cleansing of honest, sincerity, accountability, and repentance. Do you not know that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? The more we can see ourselves rightly, the more we can let ourselves be cleansed, with Christ, and raised up as God's Temple.

Today's feast, therefore, is really about the entire church. God is at work in this Church and each one of us. God is with us. We are "the holy dwelling of the Most High." As we receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, may our faith be strengthened, that God truly dwells in us.

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