November 9th: Feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica in Rome

Gospel text (*Jn* 2:13-22): Since the Passover of the Jews was near, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. He found in the temple area those who sold oxen, sheep, and doves, as well as the money-changers seated there. He made a whip out of cords and drove them all out of the temple area, with the sheep and oxen, and spilled the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables, and to those who sold doves he said, “Take these out of here, and stop making my Father’s house a marketplace.” His disciples recalled the words of Scripture, Zeal for your house will consume me.

At this the Jews answered and said to him, “What sign can you show us for doing this?” Jesus answered and said to them, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews said, “This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and you will raise it up in three days?” But he was speaking about the temple of his Body. Therefore, when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they came to believe the Scripture and the word Jesus had spoken.

«Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up»

Fr. Joaquim MESEGUER García
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Today, in this universal festivity of the Church we remember that, even though no building in this world is big enough to contain God's immensity, historically human beings have felt the need to reserve certain locations for their personal and collective meetings with God. At the beginning, the gathering places for Christians were their private homes, where communities congregated for prayer and the breaking of the Eucharistic Bread. The gathered community was —and still is today— God's Holy Temple. As time went by, these communities have been building edifices devoted to their liturgical celebrations, Word predication and prayer. And this is how, Christianity, from its initial persecutions and abuse to its final religious freedom in the Roman Empire, started to build its great basilicas. Of which, the most important one, is St. John Lateran, Rome's cathedral.

St. John Lateran is the symbol of the unity of all the Churches in the world with the Roman Church, and this is why this basilica proudly displays in its main portico the title of Mother and head of all the churches in the city and in the world (Omnium urbis et orbis ecclesiarum mater et caput). It is even more important than St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican, the latter not being actually a cathedral, but a shrine built over St. Peter's sepulcher and the Pope's present residence, who, as Bishop of Rome, has in the Lateran Basilica, his Cathedral.

Yet, we should never lose sight of the fact that the true meeting point between man and God, his actual temple, is Jesus Christ. This is why, He was empowered to tidy up his Father's home and to say these words: “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up” (Jn 2:19). Thanks to the sacrifice of his life for us, Jesus Christ has made God’s living temple from believers. This is why the Christian message reminds us that all human beings are a sacred reality, where God dwells, and that it cannot be profaned by using it as a means.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “When we remember the Consecration of a temple, let us think about what Saint Paul said: 'Each one of us is a temple of the Holy Spirit'. May we keep our soul beautiful and clean, as it pleases God that they be his holy temples” (Saint Augustine)

- “Today, the Feast of the Dedication of the Basilica of Saint John Lateran, let us remember that the Lord wishes to dwell in all hearts. Even if it happens that we move away from Him, three days are enough for the Lord to rebuild His temple within us" (Francis)

- “Particular Churches are fully catholic through their communion with one of them, the Church of Rome which presides in charity... The Lord made St. Peter the visible foundation of his Church. He entrusted the keys of the Church to him. The bishop of the Church of Rome, successor to St. Peter, is "head of the college of bishops, the Vicar of Christ and Pastor of the universal Church on earth." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n 834 and 936)