

9. November 2020

**“The Temple of God”
Feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica**

Jn 2,13-22

When the time of the Jewish Passover was near Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and in the Temple he found people selling cattle and sheep and doves, and the money changers sitting there. Making a whip out of cord, he drove them all out of the Temple, sheep and cattle as well, scattered the money changers' coins, knocked their tables over and said to the dove sellers, 'Take all this out of here and stop using my Father's house as a market.' Then his disciples remembered the words of scripture: I am eaten up with zeal for your house. The Jews intervened and said, 'What sign can you show us that you should act like this?' Jesus answered, 'Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' The Jews replied, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this Temple: are you going to raise it up again in three days?' But he was speaking of the Temple 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 what he had said.

The zeal of the Lord!

Jealous is our Lord when it comes to the honour of his Father! The house of God shall not become a market hall, nothing foreign shall dwell in this house! It is a house of prayer, a house in which God is glorified, and man may meet his God in a special way! This still applies to the outer temple today, and we would do well to check again and again that the house of God is not being abused for other purposes that do not serve the glory of God!

Praise and holy silence, dignified liturgies, prayer and attentive listening to the Word of God, communion in the Holy Spirit, places of beauty and gathering - all this fits the house of God! But not noise and distraction, a place for worldly talk and events that do not correspond to the meaning of the existence of a church building!

In today's text the Lord points out something else: Not only staying in the outer temple requires reverence and love! Jesus speaks of building the temple of his body, and that is us! This is what the apostle testifies to us in today's reading: *“Do you not realise that you are a temple of God with the Spirit of God living in you? If*

anybody should destroy the temple of God, God will destroy that person, because God's temple is holy; and you are that temple.” (1 Cor 3:16-17).

So if the Lord zealously sees to it that the outer temple is cleansed, how much does this apply to the inner temple! How much we must be prepared to let ourselves be purified by God, so that the Spirit of the Lord will expel all that defiles us inwardly! He does not bear it when we tolerate feelings, thoughts and actions in our inner being that are alien to God and warns us - often quietly but emphatically - to separate ourselves from them, to overcome them! His voice can also become clearer and more urgent when we are in great danger of agreeing with our will or not turning away from them decisively enough!

The glory of an outer temple and the dignity of the house of God also make it easier for us to understand how great the dignity is that we ourselves are temples of the Lord! He wants to dwell in us and we are in a way his paradise!

Perhaps we can grasp this mystery of love a little when we think of the Blessed Virgin Mary and consider the event of the Incarnation! God, through the Holy Spirit, has placed Himself in His Son in the womb of the Virgin! He therefore wanted to dwell in man and give and offer us this indissoluble bond with him!

We may now also understand this process spiritually for every person who accepts God's invitation and allows himself to be completely transformed by Him!

To be a temple of God, a dwelling for the Holy God! To be called to filiation and friendship with Him, even to the bridal union! How can our loving Father honour us even more?

If only we would understand this more deeply! How careful we would be not to oppose the holy presence of God, to clean our inner house for Him and to adorn it with the virtues! If we already prepare everything carefully for an earthly guest, how much more so for a heavenly guest!

We are well aware that we need deep cleansing and that we are not yet where we would like to be on our path of following Christ; and we also know that our temple is not yet decorated in a way that reflects the dignity of God's presence!

But this should not discourage us! The Lord knows our weakness, but we can offer him our sincere aspiration and our heart! Our heavenly guest will not come to us only when we are completely purified! He purifies us through His Spirit when we

cooperate! He is, so to speak, putting his own hands on us and can purify us in that depth that we are not even able to recognize!

It is important that we listen to our divine guest and sit at his feet, as Mary, Martha's sister, did (*cf. Lk 10:39*)! Listening to him, understanding him better and better, following his instructions - then God can dwell in us more and more and we will become more and more his beloved temple!

And the zeal of the Lord will awaken in us so that nothing unclean will remain in us, our heart will awaken more and more to love, and God will be able to glorify Himself in His temple!