MORNING MEDITATION

Dedication of the Lateran Basilica

Everything passes; nothing remains. Understand this, loosen your grip and find serenity.

Ezekiel 47:1-2, 8-9, 12

The Babylonians had desecrated, looted, and destroyed the temple and exiled its personnel. Ezekiel now had a vision of the restored temple which would become once again the center and source of life for his people. He compared the temple to an Eden-like place and a source of life-giving water for his people. The river of fresh water flowing from the temple transforms the salty sea into fresh water which becomes home to all sorts of marine life and all kinds of living things grow along the banks of the river. This transformation from seeming death into abundant life testifies to the life-giving power and presence of God.

We are invited to reflect on whether similar life-giving power flows from our Churches into the world today.

Psalm 46

God is our refuge and our strength,
and ever-present help in distress.
Therefore we fear not, though the earth be shaken
And mountains plunge into the depths of the sea.

1 Corinthians 3:9-11

Paul reminds the Corinthian community that they have become God's temple, "building". The temple of God is the community of believers, the Church. Ezekiel saw the temple in Jerusalem as the dwelling place of God…. Paul saw the believing community as the dwelling place of God. Paul affirms that the Spirit of God dwells within the Christian Community and so it has become the holy place. The Spirit of God is no longer seen as localized in a building…the Spirit is to be found in the living assembly of God' people.

The presence of God experienced in the temple in Jerusalem must now be experienced in the living and believing community. And the spirit has to be encountered today in our praying and worshiping community.

John 2:13-22

This excerpt tells us about Jesus cleansing the temple and claiming the temple to be his Father's house. This claim of Jesus angered those who witnessed his action. Then he claimed that it was zeal for his Father's house that moved him to throw out those who desecrated the sacred space. He made claims, even bolder, that he would raise up the temple in three days if they were to destroy it. John tells us, in this excerpt, that Jesus was referring to the temple of his body when he made this claim.

Jesus became the real temple for us. All who desire to encounter and commune with God are invited to Jesus, the temple in whom God is really present to the world. The Church, the believing assembly, the body of Christ gathered in the name of Jesus become the holy place and the holy people in whom the world must experience the presence of God today.

The presence of God experienced in the temple in Jerusalem and the real presence of God experienced in Jesus must now be experienced in the living, believing, praying, and worshiping community. Gathered in the name of Jesus, we, the Church, are called to be the holy people in whom the world must experience the presence of God today.

Saint of the day, November 9 - Dedication of the Lateran Basilica and 10 other saints are remembered this day.

Today the Church celebrates the feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica in Rome, the oldest and highest ranking of the four major basilicas in Rome. The Basilica of St. John Lateran is the cathedral of the diocese of Rome, the official ecclesiastical seat of the Holy Father, the Bishop of Rome, not St. Peter's Basilica as so many mistakenly believe. The Basilica is also called the Church of Holy Savior or the Church of St. John Baptist. In ancient Rome this was the church where everyone was baptized. It the oldest church in the West, built in the time of Constantine and was consecrated by Pope Sylvester in 324.

This basilica was the first to be built after Emperor Constantine's edict, in 313, granted Christians freedom to practice their religion. The emperor himself gave Pope Miltiades the ancient palace of the Laterani family, and the basilica, the baptistery, and the patriarchate, that is, the Bishop of Rome's residence - where the Popes lived. The basilica's dedication was celebrated by Pope Sylvester around 324 and was named Most Holy Savior; only after the 6th century were the names of St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist added.

Today, as we remember the dedication of the Lateran Basilica in Rome, the Cathedral of the Bishop of Rome, the Pope, let us remember our communion with the Universal Church and pray for harmony and unity in all churches and religions of the world.

Fr. Gus Tharappel,msfs