

## The Dedication of the Lateran Basilica, Year C

### GOSPEL

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Just before the Jewish Passover Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and in the Temple he found people selling cattle and sheep and pigeons, and the money changers sitting at their counters there. Making a whip out of some cord, he drove them all out of the Temple, cattle and sheep as well, scattered the money changers' coin, knocked their tables over and said to the pigeon-sellers, 'Take all this out of here and stop turning my Father's house into a market.' Then his disciples remembered the words of scripture: Zeal for your house will devour me. The Jews intervened and said, 'What sign can you show us to justify what you have done?' Jesus answered, 'Destroy this sanctuary, and in three days I will raise it up.' The Jews replied, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this sanctuary: are you going to raise it up in three days?' But he was speaking of the sanctuary 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 the words he had said.

(John 2:13–22)

### DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- Today's feast is unique in that it is one of the only feasts dedicated to a building: the official cathedral of Rome, mother church of the diocese and of the whole Church.
- The Lateran Basilica was the first cathedral built after the persecution of Christianity ended, on land donated to the Church by the Emperor Constantine in 324 AD.

### EXPLORING THE WORD

Here, the Gospel of John records one of Jesus' most outrageous statements. To understand the significance of it, however, we would have to understand the significance the Temple held for ancient Jews. It has been said that the architecture of a city reveals its underlying philosophy: a modern cityscape of metal and glass, for example, where the tallest buildings are banks and datacentres, reveals something important about the concerns we prioritise — function, efficiency, economy. For ancient Jews, the absolute centre of their social, religious, and political existence was the Temple. Everything revolved around it. The Temple was a microcosm of the whole cosmos: not only the place of sacrifice and atonement, but it was meant to be the place where God's presence dwelt among his people. It was the place where heaven and earth met. The presence of God had not dwelt there for some time, however; around 591 BC, the prophet Ezekiel saw the glory of the Lord depart from them, an event that sent Israel into turmoil. To have Jesus of Nazareth, the Word

made flesh, walk into the Temple was astounding enough, since it represented the return of God's presence, though they didn't recognise it. The fact that he also scattered the money changers and drove the animals away added something else to the equation: the old system of temple sacrifice was coming to an end. A new age was coming, where worship would revolve around a new temple: the crucified and risen Christ, the one in whom humanity and divinity, heaven and earth, fully embraced.

### MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- How do you understand Jesus' actions in the Temple? What thoughts or feelings do they evoke in you?
- What are the 'temples' of modern society?
- What are the 'temples' in your own life?
- 'Zeal' is a strong word, and one that many people are uncomfortable with. What do you think it means in the context of the Scripture passage?
- What would the Church look like if she shared Christ's same zeal?
- The Scriptures regularly portray God as a temple, a city, a source of strength for his people. Pray the words of today's psalm regularly this week:

God is for us a refuge and strength, a helper close at hand, in time of distress, so we shall not fear though the earth should rock, though the mountains fall into the depths of the sea.

### SHARING THE TRADITION

A closer look at the Scripture of the day, to see how it makes more explicit God's word to us through the teachings of Jesus Christ

Jesus' actions here have been described as the 'cleansing of the temple'. Not only are they packed with symbolic significance, they retain hugely spiritual significance for us, too. Throughout the New Testament, the Church is also referred to as a temple (of which Christ is the 'cornerstone'), as are our bodies. Jesus' presence within us and within our communities is a cleansing presence: he drives out everything that defiles the sacred purpose for which we were made.

- Explore the relevant sections of the Catechism of the Catholic Church that explain Jesus' fulfilment of the Temple (CCC 583–586).
- You could discuss the different elements of what a temple is, and how these speak to the Church's role and vocation.

## NOTES

Practical ideas for group leaders to employ in connecting  
Scripture and daily life, with suggestions for music and  
environment

- How does your community preserve a sense of prayerfulness in the church? Does walking into the church feel different from walking into any other building? Is there a sense of entering into something sacred, something mysterious?
- Use the Scriptures as a focus for prayer.