

FIRST READING – LATERAN BASILICA X

A reading from the book of the prophet Ezekiel.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Then the angel of the Lord brought me back to the entrance of the temple;
there, water was flowing

from below the entrance of the temple toward the east
for the temple faced east;

and the water was flowing down from
below the south end of the entrance of the temple,
south of the altar.

Then he brought me out by way of the north gate,
and led me around on the outside to the outer gate
that faces toward the east;
and the water was coming out on the right side.

He said to me,

“This water flows toward the eastern region
and goes down into the Arabah;
and when it enters the sea, the sea of stagnant waters,
the water will become fresh.

Wherever the river goes,
every living creature that swarms will live,
and there will be very many fish, once these waters reach there.

It will become fresh;
and everything will live where the river goes.

On the banks, on both sides of the river,
there will grow all kinds of trees for food.

Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail,
but they will bear fresh fruit every month,
because the water for them flows from the sanctuary.
Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.”



Pause for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say SLOWLY:

The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING – LATERAN BASILICA X

A reading from the first letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Brothers and sisters,
you are God's building.
According to the grace of God given to me,
like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation,
and someone else is building on it.
Each builder must choose with care how to build on it.
For no one can lay any foundation
other than the one that has been laid;
that foundation is Jesus Christ.
Do you not know that you are God's temple
and that God's Spirit dwells in you?
If anyone destroys God's temple,
God will destroy that person.
For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.



Pause for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say SLOWLY:

The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL READING – LATERAN BASILICA X

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

A reading from the holy gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

The Passover of the Jews was near,
and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.
In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves,
and the money changers seated at their tables.
Making a whip of cords,
he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle.
He also poured out the coins of the money changers
and overturned their tables.
He told those who were selling the doves,
“Take these things out of here!
Stop making my Father’s house a marketplace!”
His disciples remembered that it was written,
“Zeal for your house will consume me.”
The Jews said to him,
“What sign can you show us for doing this?”
Jesus answered them,
“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”
They then said,
“This temple has been under construction for forty-six years,
and will you raise it up in three days?”
But Jesus was speaking of the temple of his body.
After he was raised from the dead,
his disciples remembered that he had said this;
and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.



The GOSPEL of the LORD.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURE IN DEPTH

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

Ezekiel, who prophesied during the Babylonian Exile, had probably served as a priest before the Exile. The latter part of his book (Ez 40-48) consists of visions of the temple as it will be restored after the return from exile.

In point of fact, the visions serve as a kind of idealized blueprint for the later rebuilding of the temple. Out of it will flow a river of water (the mythical river of God or sacred river), which will have miraculous effects on the land.

From the east will issue a stream that will flow down into the Dead Sea, making its waters sweet and healthy like the Mediterranean. The Dead Sea will then swarm with fish, and trees yielding fruit all year round will grow on its banks. Their leaves will have healing properties (an image taken up later in the Book of Revelation).

Responsorial Psalm: 46:2-3, 5-6, 8-9

This is one of the royal psalms, celebrating the marriage of the king with a foreign princess. Usually it is thought to have been composed for an actual royal wedding, though the identity of the king in question is in dispute. Some, however, take it to be an ode used in the ritual of the sacred marriage that they think took place every year in early Israel.

In later times this psalm acquired a messianic connotation in Judaism. It was interpreted Christologically in the Christian Church, the bride being the people of God in each case. The first two stanzas praise the king for his beauty, while the third stanza introduces the figure of the queen for the first time.

Reading II: 1 Corinthians 3:9c-11, 16-17

Paul uses the image of building for the Church—building a temple, a house, or both. He describes his apostolic labors in terms of building. As an apostle, he lays the foundation, which is the gospel of Jesus Christ. The superstructure is built by others, that is, by the local ministry.

Two points need to be made here. One is that the term “edify” is connected, not with “edification” in a pietistic sense, but with building up (edificare) the Church as a corporate entity. The other point is that the temple imagery in this context signifies primarily the place of the indwelling Spirit of God, not a place of worship. Richard Meux Benson, the nineteenth-century founder of the Society of St. John the Evangelist, an Anglican religious order, used to protest that an overemphasis on the presence of Christ in the reserved sacrament tended to obscure the more important scriptural truth of the presence of Christ through the Spirit in his body, the Church.

Here the foundation, laid by the Apostle, is Jesus Christ himself. The foundation marks out the shape of the building to be erected. It is the task of the successors of the apostles

to see to it that the Church keeps the shape of its original foundation as the superstructure is erected upon it. Those whose work it is to build the superstructure will be under judgment at the last day and will have to give an account of how they have built.

Gospel: John 2:13-22

The Fourth Gospel has a version of the cleansing of the temple that is parallel to, but independent of, the synoptic version. John's tradition combines two elements found separately in the Synoptists: (1) the cleansing of the temple (Mk 11:11 par.); (2) the prediction of the temple's destruction (Mk 14:58 par.).

There are other features not paralleled in the Synoptists:

- (1) the whips: a greater degree of force used by Jesus (a feature that has been taken up in recent theologies of revolution);
- (2) the citation of Ps 69:9: this was a psalm traditionally used in the early Church's passion apologetics;
- (3) the interesting statement that the incident took place when the temple had been forty-six years in building—pointing to the date A.D. 28.

We take it that these features were already present in the Johannine tradition.

The evangelist himself seems to be responsible for the following features:

- (1) the shift of the cleansing of the temple from Holy Week to the beginning of the ministry.
- (2) the statement that Jesus was referring to his body in the saying about the destruction of the temple.

We will concentrate on the meaning of these two redactional features.

- (1) The reason for the shift of the incident to the beginning of the ministry will be a programmatic one. John wants to make Jesus lay out all his cards on the table right at the outset. The destruction of the temple, that is, the end of the Jewish dispensation and its worship, is the ultimate purpose of Jesus' whole ministry.
- (2) Closely connected with this is the second redactional feature. This expresses the positive side of Jesus' program, just as the destruction of the temple expresses its negative aspect. The old order of worship is to be replaced by a new one—an order focused no longer on the old temple but on the body of Christ.

In what sense is "body of Christ" used here? Does it mean the ecclesial body in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline sense? Or is it the glorified humanity of Christ? The second sense seems closer to Johannine theology elsewhere (see Jn 1:14), but we cannot altogether rule out overtones of the Pauline meaning.

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