

you are
GOD'S
BUILDING

DEDICATION OF THE LATERAN BASILICA¹

CYCLE B

Ezekiel 47:1–2, 8–9, 12

I Corinthians 3:9–13, 16–17

John 2:13–22

GATHERING

(A green plant, an unlit candle, a clear glass pitcher of water and a clear glass bowl rest on a cloth-covered table in the gathering place.)

Last week we celebrated our union in Christ with those who have died. This week we celebrate our union in Christ with the church throughout the world. *(The session begins with some conversation about how members lived in response to the gospel this past week.)*

OPENING PRAYER

(Calling members to be conscious of the presence of God, the leader lights the candle and pauses for several minutes of silence. After some time of silence, the leader stands, picks up the pitcher of water and pours it, at first slowly, and then more quickly, into the bowl.)

¹ "The observance of this feast is a token of our local church's communion with the church of Rome and with all the other churches that hold fast to similar bonds of communion....The dedication of any church recalls the heavenly Jerusalem that all church buildings 'symbolize' and toward which November's liturgical spirit directs us." 1997 Sourcebook, (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1996), pp. 231–232.

- Leader: We come together in your name, O God.
- All: Pour out your love upon us, O God.
- Leader: We come together to celebrate the body of Christ, your church, O Lord.
- All: Pour out your love upon your church, O Lord.
- Leader: We pray for our world and all your people, O God.
- All: Pour out your love on all people and the whole world, O God.

(Members join in singing an internet version of "On Holy Ground".

Focus Question

Mention some experience with the overwhelming force of water.

SCRIPTURE SHARING AND REFLECTION

Commentary

Three images of *temple* dominate the celebration of this feast of the dedication of the Basilica of St. John Lateran: the image of the ancient, grand, stone temple of Jerusalem; Paul's portrayal of God's people as God's building, his temple; and the gospel's appropriation of the image of temple to the person of Jesus.

In Ezekiel we see the great stone dwelling place of God and its witness to the bounty of our God. The prophet's water imagery takes on mythic proportions. What begins as a *trickle* becomes an *overwhelming flow*. And it brings life, nourishment, and healing wherever it flows, even to the Dead Sea. Ezekiel witnesses to the size, the immensity, the munificence of our God. The imagery of the flowing water points back to the four rivers flowing from the tree of life in the garden of Eden, and that of the temple points ahead to the heavenly Jerusalem when the reign of God has

fully come. All is encompassed by the life-giving energy which flows from our God.

In the gospel of John we discover Jesus in the temple. Zealous for the things of God, he assaults the misplaced priorities of those who put the marketplace ahead of the Lord, their God. As this narrative unfolds however, we move from a focus on the temple of stone to God's dwelling place in the flesh, Jesus as temple, God with us. From Jesus, as John tells us elsewhere in his gospel, comes living water.

The Pauline imagery completes the transformation of the image of the temple as a building made of stone to one of flesh by his portrayal of God's people as God's temple. "You are . . . [God's] building (1 Cor. 3:9)," says he.

On this feast, then, we celebrate the dwelling place of God, the whole church, big and small, and its organic unity throughout the world. From its smallest cells to its universal expression, we are the body of Christ in mission for the sake of the world. God's temple we are, and from us God's saving energy must continue to flow. A world in need seeks fresh water, nourishment, healing. Big church and small, throw open the doors! How well we witness to the size of our God depends on force of the flow!

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

(The community pauses in silence for several minutes to ponder the scriptures and the questions which follow.)

1. Recall a time when you were the recipient of someone's extraordinary generosity. What was its effect on you?
2. Speak of an experience when you felt deeply connected to the world-wide church.
3. Mention a time when God's generosity to you seemed strong and clear.
4. Say something about some experiences of the church you may have had in other parts of the world.

5. We live in a broken world. How are you a healing presence to the body of Christ?

RESPONSE IN ACTION

Leader: In the light of our sharing of life and faith over the scripture for this week's liturgy, what does God ask of you, personally; what does God ask of us as a community?
(After an extended pause the leader invites responses from the community.)

1. East African dioceses have a major commitment to the development of small church communities. Maryknoller, Fr. Joe Healy is offering to be a contact person for small church communities that would like to *twin* (e.g. exchange letters that share mutual experiences of small Christian community in the respective cultural and social situations) with small church communities in Tanzania. You may reach him as follows: Fr. Joseph Healy, M.M., Maryknoll Fathers, P.O. Box 867, DAR ES SALAAM, Tanzania.
2. Take fifteen minutes of quiet time this week. Pray in sequence for your family, your small church community, your parish, your diocese, the church throughout the nation, and the world-wide church.
3. Approach your parish social ministry program to suggest learning what neighboring parishes are doing in the area of social ministry. Offer to collect this information. When the information is gathered, explore the possibility of inter-parish collaboration in social ministry.

SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

Third Millennium Prayer

All: Gracious God, in giving us Jesus, You have forever changed our human destiny.

Through Christ's birth, preaching
and healing, You show us how
To live as your sons and daughters;

By Christ's death and resurrection,
You breathe new hope within us,
Reconciling and renewing us.

Heal us of our brokenness, so that
as one, holy people,
we might be a light to the nations,
bringing your peace to the world,
preparing us for the return of Your son
who lives and reigns with You
and the Holy Spirit,
one God, forever and ever.
Amen.

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(Members again join in singing, "On Holy Ground". The leader dips his/her hand in the water and sprinkles members liberally with the water.)

Leader: We pray, O Lord, for your church throughout the world.
We pray for John Paul II and his ministry to the whole church. Strengthen our bonds of unity that our witness to your love may bring hope to the whole world. In Jesus' name, we pray.

All: Amen.

(Members exchange a sign of peace.)