

From the PASTOR'S DESK



Heaven Meets Earth

No one can really doubt that the establishment of a cathedral church in 324 AD, in Rome, the heart of the empire that put Jesus to death is worth celebrating. But just how important is it? It's only a building.

As Christians, we never say only a building. Today's readings demonstrate just how important religious buildings are in our tradition. For the prophet Ezekiel, writing from exile in Babylon, the promise of a restoration for the people of Israel, culminated in a vision of a new temple where the glory of the Lord would dwell once more.

By the time of Christ, Ezekiel's vision was mostly fulfilled. The new Jerusalem temple was one of the wonders of the ancient world. It was a source of pride and joy for the Jewish people. It was easy to believe that it was the place where heaven had come down to earth.

Christ tells us that even the temple, even the sacrificial system established by God Himself are only stages on the way to something greater. He will teach us how to worship in Spirit and truth.

The temple, destroyed in 70 AD, no longer represents the presence of God among His people. Christ, Himself, is God's presence among us. He is Emmanuel – God with us.

This doesn't make buildings unimportant. But it does change our notion of sacred space. The risen Christ comes to us when we hear His Word preached. We encounter Him in His Mystical Body, when we meet together to worship Him. These things are done, for the most part, in buildings suited to the worship of God, who is the source of all beauty.

Churches, unlike the temple, are not mere reflections of God's presence. In the temple's Holy of Holies was an empty space. The Jewish people knew that God could not be contained in a building. But in the tabernacles of every Catholic Church is the Risen Christ. Every Catholic Church in the world is the dwelling place of the Most High.

The Lateran Basilica, Mother and Head of All Churches of the City and the World is the guarantee that our own church is part of the one Church of God. It is not the be-all and end-all of our religion. It is the place that we have the privilege of encountering Christ in the Eucharist. It is the place where heaven meets earth bringing with it the mercy and glory of the Most High.

Fr. Hernan Cely

Pastor

