

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Nov 9th 2014

“Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”

Where does God dwell? Paul’s question shatters the assumptions of his hearers. Everyone knows that God dwells primarily in the sacred temples constructed for worship. For the Jews this meant the temple in Jerusalem.

Not so, says Paul to the Corinthians. God dwells not primarily in buildings but in human beings. The primary dwelling place of God on earth is no longer a brick and mortar building but a community of believers gathered in Jesus' name.

Astounding news!

Further Paul points out that by God’s grace he was chosen to be the master builder and to lay the foundation of this building by preaching Jesus Christ. For Jesus Christ is the foundation of the building. The community of believers through faith and baptism now become part of the building and so share in Jesus’ holiness. Yes, believers become the temple of God on earth!

John’s gospel echoes Paul’s image. Jesus says, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.” Jesus raised from the dead initiates a new order of holiness. The former order of temple worship in Jerusalem is ended; the new order of worship in the temple of Jesus' Body is begun. And so Paul says simply: “You are God’s building.”

The passage from Ezekiel adds to the richness of today’s readings. The image of water is eloquent. Water flows abundantly from the temple forming a river and reviving life of plants and animals along the river banks. Could there be a richer image to foreshadow the life of God’s Spirit flowing from faith in Jesus and transforming every area of life?

We Christians have the dignity of being temples of God. To fully savor this dignity we have the challenge of naming and recognizing the Spirit’s presence renewing every area of our life.

Lord, send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth! And renew our lives!

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