
9 Wednesday

WEDNESDAY:
Dedication of the Lateran Basilica

Ezechiel 47: 1-2, 8-9, 12
or 1 Corinthians 3: 9-11, 16-17
Ps 45: 2-3, 5-6, 8-9
John 2: 13 - 22

Today's feast-day is quite unlike the rest of the church calendar. We're celebrating, not an event or mystery of the life of Christ or of His Mother, or the memory of a saint or blessed, but the dedication day of a church in Rome. Of course it's a very special church, now known as the Basilica of St John Lateran. It's been called the "mother-church of Christendom", and is the cathedral church of the Pope as bishop of Rome [not St Peter's or the Vatican, as people often assume]. It's on the site of a palace given to the Church by the first Christian Roman emperor, Constantine, and turned into a basilica.

This dedication-day celebrates the unity of the Church, and God's new temple, the people among whom God lives. It's not the physical building of bricks and mortar that we rejoice in but our communion together in the body of Christ. The new temple is built, furnished, ornamented by the holy lives, faith and love of each Christian: as St Paul says, "Don't you know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" As in Ezechiel's vision, the waters of abundant life, freshness, fruitfulness and healing flow from this temple.

Today's gospel recalls Jesus cleansing the Jerusalem temple and referring His action to the raising up of the temple of His body. It was only in the light of His resurrection that His disciples understood what He'd meant. May we who are "Easter People" (St Augustine's phrase) grow in love and devotion towards this Body of Christ, grow in appreciation of what it means to be "Church" today.

"Your house of prayer is the promise of the church in heaven"