

Fiftieth Anniversary of the Dedication of Saint Mary's Abbey Church

Ezekiel 47:1-2, 8-9, 12; 1 Corinthians 3: 9-11, 16-17; John 2:13-22

Fifty years ago, this abbey church was dedicated. It is our monastic vocation to worship God, and gathering to praise God in this church is the heartbeat of our community. Today we have one more opportunity to renew our zeal for God's house and commit ourselves to preferring nothing to the work of God.

We do not journey to the kingdom of God alone. As we go to God, we gather with the monks of our community in this sacred place where we hear the life-giving word of God, are nourished by the Eucharist, profess our common faith, bring our burdens, pour out our prayers, and find peace in God's presence.

The episode in today's gospel reading took place during Passover, the event that defined Israel's identity, at the temple, the symbol of Israel's identity. Jesus was angry because hucksters were making the temple a marketplace. He had said, "My Father's house will be called a house of prayer." (*Mark 11:17*) In saying that his body is the temple, he transferred the symbol of Israel's identity from the temple in Jerusalem to himself.

In today's reading from First Corinthians, Saint Paul wrote, "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" People should see God in us by the way we live. Today we celebrate the dedication of our church, although we know that the word "church" refers primarily to the believing community and secondarily to the building where we gather to worship. Saint Thomas of Villanova said that, since the church is God's people, the solemnity of the dedication of a church celebrates all the people who have worshipped in this sacred place. (*Homily on the Dedication of the Church, 3-7, Opera Omnia V, 515-519.*)

In Ezekiel's vision, the temple was the source of life-giving water that flowed in all directions, providing fresh water for his people and their livestock and producing vegetation and healing in abundance. We can appreciate how

comforting this was for the exiled Israelites who lived in a parched land. Their temple will be restored and will once again be the wellspring of their union with God. Reading Ezekiel through the lens of Saint Paul's understanding of church, the life-giving power of God flows through us. We are the tributaries of the waters that bring God's life to others.

Finally, we know that we are most clearly the Church when we celebrate the Eucharist which will be fulfilled when all of us are with Christ in paradise. Meanwhile, it gives us strength for the journey.