

LATERAN BASILICA/REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY.

Well, it is quite a strange combination today, the feast of the dedication of the Lateran Basilica and also remembrance Sunday, it's the task of a preacher today to try and bring both these themes together, so here is my attempt. Perhaps like many people you have wondered why on earth we have such a feast as the dedication of the Lateran today. Well it only falls on a Sunday once every 6 or 7 years, but when it does it takes precedence over the normal Sunday liturgy, because the Lateran is the Cathedral of Rome, and therefore the cathedral of the Pope, so in a sense the Lateran is the mother Church of the universal, Catholic Church around the world. The great St. Peter's church is actually in the Vatican City state, not in Rome itself, the Lateran is rather the cathedral of Rome itself, it is the Pope's Church because his authority comes from being Bishop of Rome. The Church was named after St. John the Gospel writer and apostle, and the word Lateran refers to the Lateran Hill on which the original Church was built by the Emperor Constantine in the 4th Century. It is therefore a great symbol of the catholic faith, a symbol of the authority the Pope has as Bishop of Rome and successor of Peter.

Yet strangely the readings today seem to contradict this, because we hear talk of buildings not being all that important, as we heard St. Paul say we are the true temple, the true church, the believers those who have been baptised are the true temple, because they have God dwelling in them. This is developed in the Gospel with Jesus telling the Jews, who didn't understand him, that he was the true sanctuary, the true temple. Jesus seems to be implying that the time for the temple has come to an end, because he, the divine Son of God, is the true temple, he is the son of God walking on earth. They misunderstand him of course, thinking that his reference to destroying the temple was a reverence to the building, whereas he was talking about his own body, which would rise from the dead after 3 days.

And yet Jesus was still zealous for the temple, protective of it, he clears out all those he considers to be sinning against the temple—he calls it his father's house, and many scholars say that this action of Jesus, is one of the main reasons for the plots of the Jewish leaders to kill him. So Jesus had a love and a respect for the temple, just as we should have a love and respect for the Church we worship in—but I suppose the teaching of the readings today, is that it is not this Priory Church that makes us holy, it is we, by our prayer and worship that make this Church holy. By the baptism we have received—that living water which was poured over our heads—prefigured in the words of Ezekiel today, the seal of Christ was set on our souls, and we became temples, churches of the holy spirit—and of course in receiving holy communion, we in a special way have Christ, the divine son of God living in us. These great sacraments are celebrated in Churches, like this one, and that practice has made this building holy, our prayers have made this place holy.

And it is this theme of baptism that gives us our link to remembrance Sunday, this day when we remember the many who died in the great wars of the past century. The parishioners of our parish that we remember today were baptised in Christ, and that is a sign of hope for us, because of their baptism they will rise from the dead on the last day. Our remembrance today is not one of despair, not one of overwhelming sadness, but of hope, that the souls of those who have died rest in peace and that they will receive the reward of their selflessness and sacrifice. The living waters of baptism work this miracle, as does the bread of life in the Eucharist.

Finally, those words of Ezekiel in our first reading have therefore been perfectly fulfilled, he had been devastated by the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem-by the Babylonians about 600 years before Jesus, and looked forward to it being rebuilt as it eventually was. But he foresaw I think that greater miracle of streams of living water flowing out from the temple and bringing life and nourishment to the desert. This is what happens in our Churches now, the water of baptism flows here, bringing life and healing to all peoples, helping them to become in themselves to become temples of God. In this faith let us today pray for all those who have died-the dead of the great wars and conflicts, our families and friends and all those whose names are on the November lists of the dead.