

## **THE DEDICATION OF THE LATERAN BASILICA**

**Brian Gleeson CP**

Bill Shankley, the onetime manager of the famous English soccer club, Liverpool, once remarked: '*Football isn't a religion - it's much more important than that.*' Certainly anyone going to a soccer match or any kind of football match will be impressed by the loyalty and devotion of the fans. They cheer and applaud their players, sing their club song over and over, boo and jeer any opposing player who fouls one of their own, and gives the referee a hard time if he makes a decision against any one of their own players. True fans support their team through all its '*ups*' and '*downs*'. But they can easily become '*fanatics*'.

We accept fanaticism in sport, but we get very uneasy about fanaticism in religion. It comes out so often in fundamentalism, in intolerance, and even in violence. Fanaticism in religion is a dangerous thing, and when it leads to intolerance and hatred of others, it has gone far too far. On the other hand, genuine religion is not wishy-washy. It requires total commitment and complete dedication. It's an all-or-nothing matter.

We see this in today's gospel. Jesus burns with zeal for God. The Temple was the place where God's presence was meant to be honoured and revered. But Jesus discovers that in his day this House of Prayer has been replaced with buying and selling and making money. So Jesus reacts passionately, zealously, and almost fanatically. He completely disrupts the ordinary routine of this most sacred place in Israel. He even offers himself as the new Temple, the place where God dwells and where God is to be found.

Paul takes the matter one step further. WE are also God's temple. For the Spirit of God is living in us and among us. That is another way of saying that we are the Body of Christ - the place where the God who lived in Jesus lives also in us.

Jesus' zeal for the house of God is not over. He wants to enter the temple of our hearts, to root out everything there that takes the place of God in our lives. It might be the love of money, pride, envy, lust, or the desire to dominate and even bully others. It might be bitterness, resentment, lack of forgiveness, or any number of false gods we might be placing at the centre of our lives.

On the other hand, prayer, the sacraments, reading and reflecting on the scriptures, fidelity in our relationships, our strivings to be humble, just and

compassionate in our reaching out to others, are all ways in which we prepare a place for God in our hearts.

But Jesus also wants us to be the presence of Christ, and therefore the presence of God for others. He calls us to this not just as individuals, but also as the Christian community, the Church. Ezekiel's vision shows us that if we are to be a community which reveals and manifests God's presence to the world, we need to immerse ourselves in God's love. The river flowing from the Temple comes directly from God, and is the symbol of God's love. It brings life and healing to all creatures. It makes the '*Dead Sea*' wholesome. It makes the trees fruitful and their leaves medicinal. God's love in us, i.e. the Holy Spirit in us, not only brings us to life, it enables us to bring the life and love of God, the healing and peace of God, to other people.

Jesus burns with passion to make this happen, to create a community where God can dwell. Faced with his passion, his zeal, we can feel frightened and walk away. Or we can let ourselves be caught up in his zeal for God, and participate in the great mission of the Church on earth. This is to make God known in such an appealing way that many more people will respond to God as love, and respond to God as the beginning, the middle, and the end of their lives.

What a great mission we share, then! Nothing less than God's own mission!

[bgleesoncp@gmail.com](mailto:bgleesoncp@gmail.com)