

Feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica in Rome

Noavember 9, 2008

Ez 47:1-2,8-9, 12; I Cor 3:9-11, 16-17; Jn 2:13-22

S. Mary Mark Schoenstein, OP

Most of us have fairly vivid memories of the parish church in which we were raised and received our first sacraments. Mine, old Saint Anthony Church on (then) Army Street in San Francisco, was a lovely old Romanesque-style church that fully absorbed my attention as a child. The large crucifix with the images of Saint John and Jesus' mother beneath made real for me the suffering of Jesus because of his faithfulness to his Father, Mary bowed head spoke to me of acceptance under extremely difficult circumstances, and John's up-lifted face spoke to me of the faithfulness of true friends. The large circular stained-glass window depicting the final judgment in such vivid colors, taught me that in the end we will all --- kings and queens, laborers and beggars --- come before the throne of God to be rewarded or punished according to our own deeds. The beauty of the May processions, the poignancy of the Stations of the Cross, the awe and wonder of the Eucharistic Processions at Forty Hours Devotions all brought to life the mysteries of our faith and the reality of God's presence among us "right here, right now."

In my child's mind this was truly and really God's house, God's dwelling place. Actually from this place flowed streams of living water for me and my family. (Ez 47: 1-2) But then as I made my First Communion and was Confirmed, I learned that I myself was God's temple, his living dwelling place (I Cor 3:16) as were all my brothers and sisters and friends and all the other people with whom we worshipped on Sundays.

Only when I entered religious life and had the opportunity, as a Dominican, for extended study and prayer have I come, by God's grace, to understand that in Jesus resides the fullness of the Godhead (Jn 2:19), and more wonderously, through our Eucharistic participation we share in his resurrection and become, as it were, sacred places where God and Spirit dwell, so that people around us can come to realize God's presence. Had I understood this as a child I would have been even more awed than I was with the sheer beauty of our parish church and its rituals.