

Deacon Joe DeLuca
Homily – Third Sunday of Lent 2018
John 2: 13-25

If you ever traveled to Europe, I am sure you visited a church or two. Europe has a million of them, one more beautiful (and awe-inspiring) than the next. And visiting the most impressive of them is on nearly everyone's itinerary Westminster Abbey in London , Cologne Cathedral in Germany , St. basil's Cathedral in Moscow and of course St Peter's basilica in Rome . They are a true testament to people's faith and perseverance.

When visiting one of these incredible churches, you may have noticed the same thing I did. Many people treat them like museums. Am I right? People walk around looking at things, or thumbing through their guidebooks, or taking pictures. They seem to be admiring them in a sort of impersonal way, as spectators on the sidelines. I have been guilty of this, while it is impossible to read the hearts and minds of others with any certainty, my guess would be that many who visit these magnificent buildings rarely think about God while they are there.

Oh, they are quite, absolutely, but so are people in libraries. No it seems as though it is very easy to forget that our magnificent churches are Holy and sacred places .I guess this shouldn't surprise us. We see it in our own churches. Our desire to make our churches more inviting and communal have sometimes made people so comfortable that anything goes -behavior and or dress. But sometimes the lines get crossed by a wide margin and while many of our churches are much warmer and welcoming, some seem to have lost a little bit of their sacredness, their special quality, their divine component.

If we were asked to describe our churches in one word, I am not sure many of us would use the word Holy, but I do know how I have described our church to my friends as warm, friendly and holy because of the people in it. The Jewish people of Jesus' time knew which building was the holiest, the one for which they needed to show the most respect. It was the Temple the dwelling place of God. Nothing could compare to it. The holiest place on earth could be found within its walls. And for that reason, access to that divine space was severely limited. Respecting the Temple and the regulations surrounding it was completely non-negotiable.

So for early followers of Jesus to come to realize that the Lord saw himself as a sort of Temple or dwelling place of God would have been astounding. What is Jesus talking about? They may have thought to themselves. But that's precisely what the disciples eventually came to fully realize, only by his death and resurrection they recalled what Jesus had said

Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up

By using the image of the Temple as a description of his body, Jesus was declaring an intimacy with God that would have bordered on blasphemy. He did a similar thing when he referred to God as Abba. The God who Jesus referred to was not a distant supreme ruler, but rather a friend, a companion on the journey, an intimate part of who he was. Jesus wasn't blaspheming. He was simply alluding to a profound truth.

If only we could recognize that we can share in that same sort of intimacy. And that recognition can be essential to leading a moral life, a holy life, a God centered life. This intimacy is made visible, affirmed and strengthened in a particular way through the sacraments, principally the sacraments of Initiation, Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation. In baptism we are united with the Lord in his death and resurrection.

In the Eucharist we eat the Lord's Body and Blood as spiritual food and nourishment, to bring us into true communion with God and one another. And in Confirmation we are sealed with the fullness of the Spirit, in order to continue on our faith journey. God is with all of us 24/7, but we sometimes live as if we are two people living in the same house who don't talk to each other. We often inhabit the same space without inhabiting the same dreams, hopes, desires, and mission. We can often be like strangers living under the same roof.

And that can bring about a great deal of stagnation, a relationship frozen in time. And that is when we start to become a museum instead of a temple, a snapshot of history rather than a **living, breathing, magnificent, holy place**. Most of us don't see ourselves in that way, but that is precisely who we are called to be. The ground of our very being is holy, because our God has chosen to dwell there. But that reality will never be manifested if we are unable to foster a true intimacy with our God, the one who knows us better than ourselves. God wants to be our all, our Alpha and Omega, our shepherd and our counselor, our Lord and our friend. He wants us to unite our dreams with his, embrace his mission, champion his cause, love whom he loves and go where he goes. And that is truly possible because he has chosen not to dwell simply nearby, but in our very hearts, souls, mind, and bodies. God does not simply want to be a relationship among many. He is moved in with us to speak precisely to be our everything, the one intimate relationship that surpasses all others.

My Brothers and Sisters: If you doubt that you are a temple, if you doubt that God lives in you , if you doubt that you can make any situation or circumstances holy through what you say and do , consider what we are about to experience at this table , in fact , consider whom we receive from this table , There is a very good reason that God chose to have us encounter him this way , by receiving him as food, within our very bodies, our hearts , our souls our minds, it is because **that is where he lives. By our Baptism we are now that Holy Place, that sacred ground into which God breathes new life through his spirit . We are God's dwelling place. Of that we can be sure. Let's also make sure that he is no stranger**