

## A NOTE FROM FATHER EICKHOFF

You will recall from the Passion Narrative on Palm Sunday the charge laid against Jesus when He was questioned before the Sanhedrin.

*“Finally two came forward who stated, ‘This man said, ‘I can destroy the temple of God and within three days rebuild it.’”*

In ancient times throughout the Middle East the belief among peoples was that their gods actually dwelt in the temples that human beings built for them. The statues of their various deities were not just artistic accomplishments or adornments for the temple. Rather, the statues were tangible representations of the physical presence of their gods present in the temple and in their cities. Now, the Israelites were fully aware that the One, True God did not physically dwell in the Temple of Jerusalem. Nor, did the God of All Creation need or desire a statue in the Temple to be a representation of His physical presence. In fact, we have a historical account from when the Romans first came to Jerusalem in the years before Jesus of their amazement that there was no statue of God in the Temple of Jerusalem. Although God did not physically live in the Temple, His presence can be said to have been most keenly felt in the Temple. For it was in the Temple that God’s people came to have their most important encounters with God and the Temple was the center of worship for the Jewish people.

Thus, Jesus’ statement that He could destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days was deeply distressing to His detractors. However, we know that Jesus, the Son of God, did not mean to destroy the Temple and leave His people without a means to truly encounter God. Rather, the temple made of stone has been replaced by the very body of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ who died and three days later was raised to life is the Temple of God. The Holy Eucharist, which is the Body and Blood of Jesus, is the means by which disciples of God most fully encounter God. The Holy Eucharist is the means by which God’s presence within us and within the world is most keenly experienced and felt. Thanks to the gift to God’s people of the Holy Eucharist it is not necessary to make a long journey to a specific place such as Jerusalem to fully encounter God. Instead, wherever and whenever the Holy Mass is celebrated and the Body and Blood and Jesus Christ is made present to us there is God fully present and there we fully encounter God.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Stephen Eickhoff  
Pastor