

THE TEMPLE WITHIN: FRIDAY, 19TH NOVEMBER, 2021, WEEK 33, YEAR I.

1 MACCABEES 4:36-37, 52-59; RESP: 1 CHRONICLES 29; LUKE 19:45-48

The First Reading of today tells the story of the rededication of the sanctuary of God, immediately after defeating the pagan army of Antiochus. Through the help of God, Judas Maccabees and his ten thousand men defeated sixty thousand soldiers of Antiochus. They won the liberation of Israel and Judah as an independent nation.

Their first concern was the temple of God, which the pagans had desecrated by erecting their abomination on the altar of sacrifice. When Judas and his brothers got to the temple, they found weeds and shrubs growing in its courtyards, the priests' quarters destroyed, and the entire temple area profaned by pagan idols and sacrifices offered to them.

After clearing and cleansing the area, they rebuilt the altar of burnt offering, replaced the sacred vessels from their war spoils, and consecrated priests. An eight-day feast of dedication or reconsecration was held on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month of Chislev in 164BC. This is the origin of the Jewish feast called "Hanukkah."

The Gospel of today blends smoothly with the First Reading. We see Jesus purifying the temple and restoring it as a house of prayer.

Today, let us ask ourselves, what is the state of the temple which is my heart?

Three major things commonly defile our hearts.

I. Sexual impurity in thoughts, imagination, ideations, desires and conduct. The media today has become like Antiochus, feeding people's hearts with impure images, enslaving pornographic materials and carnal ideas.

II. Bitter passions such as hatred, passion for revenge, unforgiveness and prolonged anger.

III. Greed: Inordinate attachment to, desire for and pursuit of material gains.

Today, we are called not just to examine our hearts but to take practical steps to rededicate or purify our hearts of all desecration. We can rededicate our hearts to God through sincere confession, self-discipline, deliberate fasting and penance, paying careful attention to the thoughts we allow into our hearts, by diligent prayers and by carefully meditating on holy things.

The state of our hearts is very important to God. In fact, while people judge by appearance, He looks at the state and the content of the heart (1 Samuel 16:7).