**3rd Sunday of Lent**

Theme: **The Church as God’s Temple**

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In the Gospel reading, Jesus cleansed the Temple of Jerusalem and thereafter referred to his Body as the Temple (John 2:13-25). And St. Paul poses this question to all Christians: ‘**Do you not know that you are the Temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you**?’ (1 Cor. 3:16). Hence, let us reflect on the theme, ‘The Church as Temple of God’.

The construction of a temple begins with its architectural design; then follows the choice and use of building materials. After the construction, sacrifices are offered in the temple. Let us, therefore, look at the **architecture, building materials** and **sacrifices** of the Church as God’s Temple. In addition, let us try to answer the question: Has Christ’s vision of constructing the Church as God’s Temple been realized in our lives?

1. **ARCHITECTURE:** God established the Church, the body of Christ and Temple of God, to be pure, holy, a community of faith and love, which is a sign and instrument of hope and salvation.

2. **BUILDING MATERIALS:** The building materials of the Church are the living stones of Christ and human beings, decorated with faith, hope, charity, holiness, unity, justice, compassion, honesty, chastity, etc.

3. **SACRIFICE:** Various forms of sacrifices are offered in the Church as God’s Temple. First and foremost are the merits of the sacrifice of Christ. Then, we have the sacrifices of the apostles, martyrs, other saints and those of all other Christians.

4. **REALIZATION:** Has Christ’s vision for establishing the Church been realized? The answer is: yes and no. **It is yes, because,** the sacrifices of Christ, the apostles, the martyrs, other saints and other Christians have been offered.

**On the other hand, the answer is no, because of** the sins of the human members of the Church. By our sins, we turn the Temple of God into a marketplace. As Jesus noticed in Jerusalem 2000 years ago, we are buying and selling in the Church (e.g. The gospel is being commercialized; holy water and holy oils are being sold, just as fake herbal medicine peddlers do).

Secondly, as in the Jerusalem temple, exchange of money is going on in the church (e.g. tickets for appointments with some pastors are obtained at a fee; certain blessings are given at a monetary price). Thirdly, as in a marketplace, today there is a lot of noise making in the Church.

Fourthly, as in a marketplace, there are cheatings and deceptions in the Church (e.g. false testimonies; pastors consulting local/native shrines, where they are required to perform strange rites to obtain miraculous powers.  For instance, a few years ago, a Ghanaian newspaper reported the strange sight of a pastor ‘sleeping’ with a sheep).

**CONCLUSION:**

Dear Christians (leadership and ordinary membership alike), let us arise (as Nehemiah told his people) and rebuild the Temple of God by:
– repenting from acts which turn the Temple into a marketplace;
– making personal spiritual sacrifices; and
– using the materials of faith, hope, charity, holiness, unity, justice, compassion, honesty, charity, etc. Amen!