

Palm Sunday



Christ's Entry Into Jerusalem, Jean-Hippolyte Flandrin

The Day Before Palm Sunday

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Laz'arus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.² There they made him a supper; Martha served, and Laz'arus was one of those at table with him.³ Mary took a pound of costly ointment of pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment.⁴ But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was to betray him), said,⁵ "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?"⁶ This he said, not that he cared for the poor but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box he used to take what was put into it.⁷ Jesus said, "Let her alone, let her keep it for the day of my burial.⁸ The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me." (John 12:1-8)

Palm Sunday

And when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Beth'phage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples,² saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find an ass tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me.³ If any one says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and he will send them immediately."⁴ This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying,

⁵ "Tell the daughter of Zion, Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of an ass." (Matt 21: 1-5)

³² So those who were sent went away and found it as he had told them.³³ And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?"³⁴ And they said, "The Lord has need of it."³⁵ And they brought it to Jesus, and throwing their garments on the colt they set Jesus upon it.³⁶ And as he rode along, they spread their garments on the road.³⁷ As he was now drawing near, at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen,³⁸ saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"³⁹ And some of the Pharisees in the multitude said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples."⁴⁰ He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out."

⁴¹ And when he drew near and saw the city he wept over it, ⁴² saying, “Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace! But now they are hid from your eyes. ⁴³ For the days shall come upon you, when your enemies will cast up a bank about you and surround you, and hem you in on every side, ⁴⁴ and dash you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave one stone upon another in you; because you did not know the time of your visitation.”

⁴⁵ And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold, ⁴⁶ saying to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be a house of prayer’; but you have made it a den of robbers.” (Luke 19:32-46)

¹⁴ And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. ¹⁵ But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” they were indignant; ¹⁶ and they said to him, “Do you hear what these are saying?” And Jesus said to them, “Yes; have you never read,

‘Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast brought perfect praise’?”

¹⁷ And leaving them, he went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there. (Matt 21:14-17)

Dominus Flevit Church

Dominus Flevit Church is situated approximately halfway down the slope of the Mount of Olives along a path that led to the Eastern Gate of Jerusalem. It is near this site where Jesus would have looked upon Jerusalem’s walls, the city beyond, and the majestic Temple rising above the Temple Mount. Streams of people, men, women, and children had come out to meet Jesus along the roadway.



Dominus Flevit Church, Mount of Olives

Most of the crowd spread their garments on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the

road. ⁹ And the crowds that went before him and that followed him shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” (Matt 21:8-9)

Upon seeing the crowd and the city behind him, Jesus wept.

And when he drew near and saw the city he wept over it... (Luke 19:41)



Byzantine Mosaic Floors

It is this scripture that the Dominus Flevit Church commemorates. The Franciscans built the Dominus Flevit church between 1953 through 1955. During the excavation of the site ruins of a Byzantine chapel were discovered; the chapel was believed to have been built sometime during the 7th century. Historical and archeological evidence suggests that the church was dedicated to Saint Anna, who prophesied over Mary when she and Joseph brought Jesus to the Temple to be dedicated. While this church was destroyed many centuries ago intact portions of its mosaic floors were uncovered by archeologists. In addition, ruins of a Crusader chapel were also discovered along with a much older necropolis. It is estimated that the necropolis had been used between the 4th century BC through the 2nd century AD; there is evidence that Christians had used this site to bury their dead.

The Italian architect, Antonio Barluzzi, known as the “Architect of the Holy Land,” designed the Church to look like a teardrop. The Church overlooks the eastern wall of Jerusalem providing the pilgrim with a beautiful view of the Temple Mount and the Dome of the Rock. This view may also be seen from within the Church through a stained glass window behind the altar. Another notable design feature is the altar’s mosaic depicting a hen with her little chicks. This commemorates another scripture passage much like that of Luke 19, but coming from the Gospel of Matthew:



³⁷ “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! ³⁸ Behold, your house is forsaken and desolate. ³⁹ For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’” (Matt 23:37-39)

Altar of the Dominus Flevit Church. How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!

Matthew places the above passage as occurring shortly before Jesus’ Olivet Discourse, several days after His triumphant entry into Jerusalem. It contains, however, the same sentiment of grief that Jesus experienced as He foresaw the coming doom that awaited Jerusalem and her inhabitants that would occur some forty years later when Roman legions destroyed Jerusalem and her Temple, while killing and enslaving the inhabitants.

Photos From Dominus Flevit



View from Dominus Flevit: the eastern wall of Jerusalem, the Dome of the Rock, the Old City, and the skyline of the New.



The Russian Orthodox Church of Saint Mary Magdalene

The Eastern Gate and the Golden Gate

When Jesus entered Jerusalem he passed through the Eastern Gate, the nearest entrance to the Temple. This gate had a name, actually it had several names by the time Jesus had ridden through it; it was known as the *Shushan* Gate, and it was referred to as the Beautiful Gate in chapter 3 of the Acts of the Apostles. The gate that Jesus entered Jerusalem is long since gone, perhaps destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD. The Golden Gate was built sometime between the 6th and 7th centuries by either the Byzantine emperor Justinian I, or by Byzantine craftsmen under the rule of the Umayyad caliphs. Archeological evidence suggests that the Golden Gate is built over the remains of the earlier Eastern Gate.

The Eastern Gate (today's Golden Gate) and the Messiah are linked by Biblical prophecy. The Jews of Jesus' day believed that the Eastern Gate was connected to the coming of the Messiah; many Jews, Christians, and even Muslims continue to believe the Messiah will return through the Eastern Gate. The Book of Ezekiel speaks of the "glory of the Lord" (Shekinah Glory) traveling to and from the city of Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives through the Eastern Gate. As we read in the Photo-Journal Essay, Jesus Celebrates the Feasts of Tabernacles and Hanukkah, Jesus is associated with the Shekinah Glory of the Old Testament.



The Golden Gate

Afterward he brought me to the gate, the gate facing east. ² And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the east; and the sound of his coming was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with his glory. ³ And the vision I saw was like the vision which I had seen when he came to destroy the city, and like the vision which I had seen by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face. ⁴ As the glory of the Lord entered the temple by the gate facing east, ⁵ the Spirit lifted me up, and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the Lord filled the temple. (Eze 43:1-5)

The Jews of Jesus' time were well aware of Ezekiel's prophecy and were eagerly awaiting the arrival of the Messiah. One can well imagine that when Jesus appeared riding on an ass from the Mount of Olives towards Jerusalem they saw in Him the fulfillment of this prophecy. It was with great excitement that they greeted Him with shouts of "Hosanna" and "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!" And upon His entry through the Eastern Gate and His going to the Temple and the driving out of the merchants they must have thought that the Shekinah Glory had returned to the Temple.

Today, many Christian bible scholars believe that Ezekiel's prophesy is indeed a description of the events that occurred on Palm Sunday as Jesus traveled from the Mount of Olives, through the Eastern Gate, and into the Temple. Jewish scholars, who do not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, believe that this prophecy has not yet been fulfilled, but will be when the Messiah comes to usher in the Messianic Age. At least some Muslims believed, especially during the Middle Ages when they controlled Jerusalem, that the Jewish Messiah would come through the Eastern Gate (by then the Golden Gate) and wrest control of the city from the Islamic occupiers. To this end the Ottoman Sultan, Suleiman the Magnificent, had the gate sealed off to prevent the Messiah from entering the city. The Golden Gates are sealed to this day. Some Christian and Jewish bible scholars see this as the fulfillment of another prophecy from Ezekiel:

Then he brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary, which faces east; and it was shut. ² And he said to me, "This gate shall remain shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter by it; for the Lord, the God of Israel, has entered by it; therefore it shall remain shut. (Eze 44:1-2)

While the Jews await the Messiah to come from the Mount of Olives and enter Jerusalem through the Golden Gates, Christians recognize that the Messiah has already come, has left Jerusalem, passed through the Eastern Gate, and has ascended into heaven from the Mount of Olives:

¹⁸ Then the glory of the LORD went forth from the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubim. ¹⁹ And the cherubim lifted up their wings and mounted up from the earth in my sight as they went forth, with the wheels beside them; and they stood at the door of the east gate of the house of the LORD; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them. (Eze 10:18-19)

²³ And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain [Mount of Olives] which is on the east side of the city. (Eze 11:23)

Jesus, the Shekinah Glory of the Lord, fulfilled these prophecies as recorded in Acts of the Apostles:

⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” ⁷ He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸ But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samar’ia and to the end of the earth.” ⁹ And when he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹ and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:6-11)

And we have the promise of His return. “This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.” Zechariah prophesied this event 500 years earlier when he spoke of the coming of the Messiah and the judgment of the nations who stood against Jerusalem:

⁴ On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives which lies before Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley; so that one half of the Mount shall withdraw northward, and the other half southward. (Zech 14:4)

When the “Day of the Lord” occurs, then we may come full circle (depending on one interpretation of Scripture) with the Lord returning to the Mount of Olives, and entering the city of Jerusalem through the Golden Gates to rule and reign, and thus fulfilling in their entirety the prophecies of Ezekiel:

Afterward he brought me to the gate, the gate facing east. ² And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the east; and the sound of his coming was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with his glory. ³ And the vision I saw was like the vision which I had seen when he came to destroy the city, and like the vision which I had seen by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face. ⁴ As the glory of the Lord entered the temple by the gate facing east, ⁵ the Spirit lifted me up, and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the Lord filled the temple. (Eze 43:1-5)

It is for these reasons that Jews and Christians have for centuries prayed facing East towards the Golden Gate for the Coming and the Return of the Messiah. The Eastern Orthodox have continued this Tradition to this day. Prior to the Second Vatican Council the altar was placed in the eastern most portion of the church and the people, together with the priest, faced East (*Ad Orientem*) as watchful virgins awaiting the return of the Bridegroom.

And should the Lord fulfill His Word by returning to the Eastern Gate as some believe, then we may even come more full circle than we might ever imagine. This Photo-Journal began at the Eastern Gate when Joachim and Anne met at the Eastern Gate. They joyfully greeted one another with a holy kiss holding within their hearts a promise from the Lord that they would have a daughter through whom the Logos Himself would pass as through a Golden Gate from Heaven to Earth.



Joachim and Anne Meet at the Golden Gate
by Giotto di Bondone, 1305

Reflections

Kevin's Reflections:

Ezekiel, Palm Sunday, and the Third Temple

Ezekiel the prophet was born in Israel, but his prophecies occurred while in Babylon during the diaspora of the Babylonian Captivity (605 to 536 BC). The main points of Ezekiel's prophecies were the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Babylonians, the restoration of Israel, the building of the Third Temple, the battle for Jerusalem, and the coming of the Messiah. There is some debate among bible scholars as to which Temple the prophecies of Ezekiel are referring to, the First or Solomon's Temple, the Second or Zerubbabel/Herod's Temple, or the Third or Messianic Temple? I am proposing in this reflection (and others that follow) that many of Ezekiel's prophecies actually apply to all three Temples and as such we can gain insights as to how Jesus, in His actions and teachings of Palm Sunday and Holy Monday through Holy Wednesday, fulfills these prophecies. What are my justifications for making this hypothesis? First, we must understand when interpreting scripture that there are two major senses of scripture, the literal and the spiritual senses, while the spiritual sense is actually comprised of three senses: the moral sense, the allegorical sense, and the anagogical sense. Part of my justification for interpreting the Ezekiel prophecies as relating to all three Temples is that I believe this is consistent with the allegorical and anagogical senses of scripture. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church through the allegorical sense "we can acquire a more profound understanding of events by recognizing their significance in Christ; thus the crossing of the Red Seas is a sign or type of Christ's victory and also of Christian Baptism," and through the anagogical sense "we can view realities and events in terms of their eternal [and eschatological] significance, leading us toward our true homeland: thus the Church on earth is a sign of the heavenly Jerusalem." (CCC 117) I believe we can see Christ in both His First Coming and in His Second, glorious return in the prophecies of Ezekiel. The coherence of Old Testament prophecy and their fulfillment in Christ demonstrates the beauty of truth of our Faith. Prophecy is also instructive as we can learn from the mistakes of those who did not follow the ordinances of the Lord so that we may avoid the judgments that they faced. It is up to the reader to employ their knowledge of scripture, reason, and spiritual discernment to decide whether or not my hypothesis is justified.

Why did the Shekinah Glory leave the Temple and Jerusalem?

The "glory of the God of Israel" [the Shekinah Glory as a foreshadowing of Christ] spoke to Ezekiel:

⁴ *And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, like the vision that I saw in the plain.* ⁵ *Then he said to me, "Son of man, lift up your eyes now in the direction of the north." So I lifted up my eyes toward the north, and behold, north of the altar gate, in the entrance, was this image of jealousy.* (Eze 8:4-5)

Ezekiel is told why the Shekinah glory will leave the Temple and Jerusalem:

⁶ *And he [the glory of the God of Israel] said to me, "Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations that the house of Israel are committing here, to drive me far from my sanctuary? But you will see still greater abominations."*

⁷ *And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold, there was a hole in the wall.* ⁸ *Then said he to me, "Son of man, dig in the wall"; and when I dug in the wall, lo, there was a door.* ⁹ *And he said to me, "Go in, and see the vile abominations that they are committing here."* ¹⁰ *So I went in and saw; and there, portrayed upon the wall round about, were all kinds of creeping things, and loathsome beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel.* ¹¹ *And before them stood seventy men of the elders of the house of Israel, with Ja-azani'ah the son of Shaphan standing among them. Each had his censer in his hand, and the smoke of the cloud of incense went up.* ¹² *Then he said to me, "Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the dark, every man in his room of pictures? For they say, 'The LORD does not see us, the LORD has forsaken the land.'"* ¹³ *He said also to me, "You will see still greater abominations which they commit."*

¹⁴ *Then he brought me to the entrance of the north gate of the house of the LORD; and behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz.* ¹⁵ *Then he said to me, "Have you seen this, O son of man? You will see still greater abominations than these."*

¹⁶ *And he brought me into the inner court of the house of the LORD; and behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men, with their backs to the temple of the LORD, and their faces*

toward the east, worshiping the sun toward the east.¹⁷ Then he said to me, “Have you seen this, O son of man? Is it too slight a thing for the house of Judah to commit the abominations which they commit here, that they should fill the land with violence, and provoke me further to anger? Lo, they put the branch to their nose.¹⁸ Therefore I will deal in wrath; my eye will not spare, nor will I have pity; and though they cry in my ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them.” (Eze 8:7-18)

It was because of the sin of unfaithfulness and idolatry that the Shekinah Glory left the Temple, Jerusalem, and the people of Israel abandoning them to destruction and the captivity by the Babylonians. We see in the prophecies of Ezekiel and the events that occurred subsequently a parallel to the events of Palm Sunday. Jesus, the “glory of the God of Israel,” enters Jerusalem through the Eastern Gate and proceeds to the Temple and confronts the corruption that is occurring within the “house of prayer.” Jesus wept over the Temple, Jerusalem, and her people knowing what would befall them.

⁴¹ And when he drew near and saw the city he wept over it, ⁴² saying, “Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace! But now they are hid from your eyes. ⁴³ For the days shall come upon you, when your enemies will cast up a bank about you and surround you, and hem you in on every side, ⁴⁴ and dash you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave one stone upon another in you; because you did not know the time of your visitation.”

This all came to pass forty years later when Roman legions destroyed Jerusalem, the Temple and delivered the people of Israel into death or into a diaspora from which they would not return for two thousand years.

How did things get so bad?

How did it happen that Israel became so corrupted that they broke faith with their God choosing the worship of foreign gods over the Lord God of Israel? Two word answer: Bad Shepherds. I will not be discussing this now, but will begin to address this topic on Holy Monday and continue through Holy Wednesday, nevertheless, I will include a chapter from the Book of Ezekiel that clearly demonstrates that it was bad shepherds that was the cause of Israel’s fall from grace and the reason for the Shekinah Glory leaving the Temple and the nation of Israel. In the next section of this reflection I will address the issue of where the Shekinah Glory went after it left Israel.

¹ The word of the LORD came to me: ² Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to them: To the shepherds, thus says the Lord GOD: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who have been pasturing themselves! Should not shepherds pasture the flock? ³ You consumed milk, wore wool, and slaughtered fatlings, but the flock you did not pasture. ⁴ You did not strengthen the weak nor heal the sick nor bind up the injured. You did not bring back the stray or seek the lost but ruled them harshly and brutally. ⁵ So they were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and became food for all the wild beasts. They were scattered ⁶ and wandered over all the mountains and high hills; over the entire surface of the earth my sheep were scattered. No one looked after them or searched for them.

⁷ Therefore, shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: ⁸ As I live—oracle of the Lord GOD—because my sheep became plunder, because my sheep became food for wild beasts, for lack of a shepherd, because my shepherds did not look after my sheep, but pastured themselves and did not pasture my sheep, ⁹ therefore, shepherds, hear the word of the LORD:

¹⁰ Thus says the Lord GOD: Look! I am coming against these shepherds. I will take my sheep out of their hand and put a stop to their shepherding my flock, so that these shepherds will no longer pasture them. I will deliver my flock from their mouths so it will not become their food. (Eze 34:1-10)

Ezekiel’s prophecies of a Third Temple

Ezekiel was given a vision of the Third Temple, also known as the Final Temple and Messianic Temple. You can read about Ezekiel’s vision of the Third Temple in chapters forty through forty-three in the Book of Ezekiel. Remember, that when Ezekiel spoke of his vision the Babylonians had just destroyed Solomon’s Temple. The Second Temple would not be built for another hundred years or so, and it would be several more hundreds of years before it too would be destroyed, and this would be followed by another, longer diaspora.

Orthodox Jews believe that this Third Temple will be built shortly before the coming of the Messiah and will be a sign of His imminent worldwide rule from Jerusalem. This coming of the Messiah is prophesized in chapter 43 in the Book of Ezekiel:

Afterward he brought me to the gate, the gate facing east.² And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the east; and the sound of his coming was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with his glory.³ And the vision I saw was like the vision which I had seen when he came to destroy the city, and like the vision which I had seen by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face.⁴ As the glory of the LORD entered the temple by the gate facing east,⁵ the Spirit lifted me up, and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple. (Eze 43:1-5)

We've seen this passage from Ezekiel before when we were discussing Jesus' fulfillment of this scripture when He entered Jerusalem and the Temple on Palm Sunday. But it must be remembered that on Palm Sunday Jesus entered the Second Temple, not the Third. So does Christ also fulfill Ezekiel's prophecy in the Third Temple and if so does the Shekinah Glory reside within it? The answer to both of these questions is—Yes. The Third Temple is Christ and His Church.

Christ and the Church as the Fulfillment of Ezekiel's Third Temple

You will remember from a previous Photo-Journal Essay that we read about Jesus cleansing the Temple early in His public ministry [Between the Marriage of Cana and Our Next Stop, Mount Precipice]. At that time the Jews asked Jesus by what authority did He presume to act in such a manner within the jurisdiction of the Temple. Jesus responded,

“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”²⁰ The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?”²¹ But he spoke of the temple of his body. (John 2:19-21)

So Jesus, in His own words, testifies that His body is a Temple.

It was just a few days after His triumphant entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday that Jesus prophesized that the Second Temple would be destroyed:

Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple.² But he answered them, “You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another, that will not be thrown down.” (Matt 24:1-2)

The Second Temple was destroyed just as Jesus said that it would. But when Jesus rose from the dead His body became the everlasting, Third and Messianic Temple.

This Jesus is the Shekinah Glory of the Third Temple. One might rightfully ask, “Okay, but Jesus ascended into heaven forty days after His resurrection. So where is the Shekinah glory now?” The Shekinah glory of God is to be found in Christ's Church of Whom He is the Head. This glory came upon the Mary, the Apostles and disciples in the Upper Room in Jerusalem.

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.² And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.³ And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them.⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Act 2:1-4)

The Shekinah Glory of the Spirit of Christ resides not only in the Church, but also in the living stones (1Peter 2:5) of the believers that are built up into the Temple of which Christ is the Head (Col 1:18).

¹⁶Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? ¹⁷If any one destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and that temple you are. (1Cor 3:16)

¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,²⁰ built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,²¹ in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord;²² in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. (Eph 2:19-22)

What a beautiful image of the Messianic Temple, each person in Christ is a living stone being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ as our Cornerstone into a holy Temple and a “dwelling” [Hebrew: *Shekinah*] place of God in the Spirit. Each believer carries with him or herself the Shekinah glory; together Christ dwells among us

as His Mystical Body, the Church and Bride of the Bridegroom. And our Catholic and Orthodox Churches hold within their tabernacles the Real Presence of Christ in Eucharist—truly, God’s glory dwells with us.

Does this mean that the Church has replaced Israel’s Third Temple?

No. *For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.* (Rom 11:29) The Catholic Church teaches this expressly:

When she delves into her own mystery, the Church, the People of God in the New Covenant, discovers her link with the Jewish People, "the first to hear the Word of God." The Jewish faith, unlike other non-Christian religions, is already a response to God's revelation in the Old Covenant. To the Jews "belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ", "for the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable." (CCC 839)

The Catholic Church goes further and directly links the Second Coming of Christ for His Church with the Jewish people and the promises made to them by God through the patriarchs and prophets:

The glorious Messiah's coming is suspended at every moment of history until his recognition by "all Israel", for "a hardening has come upon part of Israel" in their "unbelief" toward Jesus. St. Peter says to the Jews of Jerusalem after Pentecost: "Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old." St. Paul echoes him: "For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?" The "full inclusion" of the Jews in the Messiah's salvation, in the wake of "the full number of the Gentiles", will enable the People of God to achieve "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ", in which "God may be all in all." (CCC 674)

I believe that the Holy Scriptures and Church teaching leaves the door open for the Third Temple to be built on the Temple Mount in spite of the geopolitical forces that are aligned against this happening. If you think that this is improbable then consider the probability that after 2000 years of diaspora the nation of Israel would be restored and this just three years after a Satanically inspired genocide was perpetrated against the Jews of Europe. This too was prophesied by the Prophet Ezekiel!

Ezekiel’s prophecies of a restored Israel

We read that the Shekinah Glory left the Temple and Israel because of the corruption and idolatry that occurred within the Temple, the Chosen People. In spite of this betrayal, God promised through Ezekiel that He would not abandon His people, but would restore them and their nation.

The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; it was full of bones.² And he led me round among them; and behold, there were very many upon the valley; and lo, they were very dry.³ And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord GOD, thou knowest."⁴ Again he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.⁵ Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live.⁶ And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD." ...¹¹ Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off.'¹² Therefore prophecy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you home into the land of Israel.¹³ And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people.¹⁴ And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken, and I have done it, says the LORD." (Eze 37:1-14)

We are living in a time of prophetic fulfillment. So what should we be doing? The first thing we should do is to learn from the past. Corruption in the Temple of God and a refusal to repent and turn aside from evil led to the destruction of Solomon’s Temple by the Babylonians, and the Second Temple by the Romans, and in both instances the diaspora of the Jewish people. Do we presume that this time that the Third Temple, the Church, will be immune from God’s just judgments? Again, turning to the Catechism of the Catholic Church we find that there will not be immunity (or what some might call a Pre-Tribulation Rapture) for the Church:

Before Christ's second coming the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers. The persecution that accompanies her pilgrimage on earth will unveil the "mystery of iniquity" in the form of a religious deception offering men an apparent solution to their problems at the price of apostasy from the truth. The supreme religious deception is that of the Antichrist, a pseudo-messianism by which man glorifies himself in place of God and of his Messiah come in the flesh. (CCC 675)

If we happen to be living in prophetic times, then we need to ask ourselves, "Will we remain faithful during this "final trial?" I hope and pray that I, like Joshua, will say in the face of these trials and persecutions, "*but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*" (Joshua 24:15)

Why all this talk in a Palm Sunday essay about cleansing of the Temple, (the Church), trials that will shake the faith of many believers, and of Christ's Return? Because from Palm Sunday through Holy Wednesday Jesus will be giving the People of Israel, their religious leaders, and even His disciples a warning of the judgments to come and of His Return. And as we've discussed in this essay what is true for the Temple and the Jews is also true for the Church and Christian believers. Holy Week is not just a commemoration of what Jesus has done for us, it is a call for the holiness of His Bride, and this begins with us Looking East as wise virgins, along with a healthy dose of the fear of the Lord.

Ad Orientem

Part 1: Why We Face East

Go to any business website (or at least one that has its act together) and you will find a page in which they have posted their "Mission Statement." Here you will generally find a brief statement explaining why the organization exists, its goals, and how it attempts to accomplish its goals. A successful business "orients" all of its energy, resources, and talents towards the achievement of this mission. I did a little investigation of the etymology (linguistic origins) of the word "orientation." The word "orientation" has at its root in "orient" which comes from the Latin, "*orientem*" which means East. According to the Online Etymology Dictionary (www.etymonline.com) "orientation" originally meant: "arrangement of a building, etc., to face east or any other specified direction." This word clearly developed in reference to a very specific type of building, a church building, which from Christianity's earliest days were built so that were they "oriented" facing East (*ad orientem*). The Online Etymology Dictionary also added another aspect to the meaning of the word orientation: "noun of action from orient." Since "orientation" is a noun it is associated with a "state of being," and in the case living things, especially people and organizations, one can properly say a "state of becoming." So in order for a business to *be come* successful, that is to accomplish its "mission," it must always be "oriented" towards its Mission.

Through the twenty centuries the Church has understood that her orientation is East, and it is in maintaining that directionality that she has and will continue to achieve her mission and become her destiny as the Bride. But why East? It is said that the Jews and the Muslim pray towards the East, but it can be more properly said that they pray towards a city, Jerusalem for the Jews, and Mecca to Muslims. Do Christians pray to a particular city or geographical location? The answer, like our Faith, is "incarnational" that is it has both physical and spiritual elements. Some Christian scholars hold that the origin of *Ad Orientem* is to be found in the account of Jesus' ascension from the Mount of Olives and the prophecies of Zechariah the Prophet (which we have already discussed) while others see it in the prophecies of Ezekiel and the East Gate. Jesus, Himself, made reference to the east when discussing His return with the disciples:



The Golden or Eastern Gates
Beneath these gates lie the remains of the Eastern Gate through which Jesus rode on Palm Sunday

²³ Then if any one says to you, 'Lo, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it. ²⁴ For false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ Lo, I have told you beforehand. ²⁶ So, if they say to you, 'Lo, he is in the wilderness,' do not go out; if they say, 'Lo, he is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. ²⁷ For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of man. (Matt 24:23-27)

But do all of these explanations share a common reason as to why we “face east?” They do. They all orient the Church towards Christ and His Return. Saint John of Damascus (675-749) offers us a beautiful explanation as to why the Church prays *ad orientem*:

It is not without reason or by chance that we worship towards the East. But seeing that we are composed of a visible and an invisible nature, that is to say, of a nature partly of spirit and partly of sense, we render also a twofold worship to the Creator; just as we sing both with our spirit and our bodily lips, and are baptized with both water and Spirit, and are united with the Lord in a twofold manner, being sharers in the mysteries and in the grace of the Spirit.

Since, therefore, God is spiritual light, and Christ is called in the Scriptures Sun of Righteousness and Dayspring, the East is the direction that must be assigned to His worship. For everything good must be assigned to Him from Whom every good thing arises. Indeed the divine David also says, Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth: O sing praises unto the Lord: to Him that rideth upon the Heavens of heavens towards the East. Moreover the Scripture also says, And God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed: and when he had transgressed His command He expelled him and made him to dwell over against the delights of Paradise, which clearly is the West. So, then, we worship God seeking and striving after our old fatherland. Moreover the tent of Moses had its veil and mercy seat towards the East. Also the tribe of Judah as the most precious pitched their camp on the East. Also in the celebrated temple of Solomon the Gate of the Lord was placed eastward. Moreover Christ, when He hung on the Cross, had His face turned towards the West, and so we worship, striving after Him. And when He was received again into Heaven He was borne towards the East, and thus His apostles worship Him, and thus He will come again in the way in which they beheld Him going towards Heaven; as the Lord Himself said, As the lightning cometh out of the East and shineth even unto the West, so also shall the coming of the Son of Man be. So, then, in expectation of His coming we worship towards the East. But this tradition of the apostles is unwritten. For much that has been handed down to us by tradition is unwritten.

The Church is watchful, looking towards the East because we eagerly await the return of the Bridegroom for we are His Bride. This orientation keeps the Church focused on her mission:

1. To fulfill Christ’s Great Commission of His Church:

¹⁸ *And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.”* (Matt 28:18-20)

2. To equip the holy ones that we grow in every way into Him Who is the Head, Christ.

¹¹ *And he gave some as apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the extent of the full stature of Christ, ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be infants, tossed by waves and swept along by every wind of teaching arising from human trickery, from their cunning in the interests of deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Rather, living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into him who is the head, Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, with the proper functioning of each part, brings about the body’s growth and builds itself up in love.* (Eph 4:11-16)

3. To finish the race and endure to the end:

⁹ *“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation, and put you to death; and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake. ¹⁰ And then many will fall away, and betray one another, and hate one another. ¹¹ And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. ¹² And because wickedness is multiplied, most men’s love will grow cold. ¹³ But he who endures to the end will be saved. ¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come.* (Matt 24:9-14)

An *Ad Orientem* orientation keeps our eyes fixed on Jesus, not just the Jesus of Palm Sunday, but also the Jesus who is King of kings and Lord of lords; Who is returning to judge the nations of the world. But before this can happen He must first cleanse the temple of His Church:

¹⁷ *For the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?* (1Peter 4:17)

⁵ *We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,*
⁶ *being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.* (1Peter 4:5-6)

Will we be able to stand and remain firm in the faith when He appears and through the persecutions by which He will refine us like gold?

² *But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? “For he is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap; ³ he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, till they present right offerings to the LORD. ⁴ Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.* (Mal 3:2-4)

You might ask, “Do you really believe that our orientation makes that big a difference? The short answer is, “Yes!” but you can read more in *Ad Orientem* Part II which can be found in the reflections of Holy Monday.

Jan’s Reflection:

The Eastern Gate in Jerusalem, also known as the Golden Gate was the meeting place of Anna and Joachim. They were both instructed to meet each other here by their angels. They came together at the Golden Gate with a holy kiss that gave birth to Mary, the Immaculate; Mary the mother of Jesus. The Eastern Gate was seen by the Fathers of the Church as the womb of the virgin which was shut because the Lord was the only one to enter it. Luther, Calvin, and Wesley believed this, but most Protestants today do not.

Jesus passed through the Eastern Gate on many occasions. Prior to His passion the Lord stood on the Mount of Olives (the site of Church of Dominus Flevit) and wept for Jerusalem. The Dominus Flevit Church, in the shape of a tear commemorates Jesus weeping over Jerusalem for the Jews were blind and did not know the day of their visitation.

Our Lord passed through the Eastern Gate on His way to the Temple and then on to His Passion.

Scripture tells us that we will see Jesus at the Second Coming through the Eastern Gate in all His glory. This glory is known as the Shekinah glory, the “glory of the Lord” that will shine from the East.

Prior to Vatican II the Church used to face East in hope and remembrance of His return.

The view of the sealed Golden Gates and the Dome of the Rock were spectacular while standing at the Dominus Flevit. I was visualizing what it might be like when He returns. This site was one of my absolute favorites in our trip to Israel.