

In Their Midst

Session 10. Make Me a Sanctuary

The holy God does not merely free a people from slavery. He graciously orders their worship so that he may dwell in their midst.

What We Found

The sanctuary begins with God's initiative and Israel's willing response. God supplies the pattern, purpose, and promise of his presence, while the people offer materials and eventually their skills. Israel does not manufacture or purchase God's nearness.

The sanctuary's court, altar, tent, veil, and inner furnishings reveal both nearness and holiness. God truly intends to dwell among his people, but access is ordered, reverent, sacrificial, and mediated.

The earthly sanctuary points beyond itself to Christ. Jesus is the true temple and the high priest who opens access to the Father by his own blood. Catholic churches are not a rebuilt tabernacle. They exist for the worship Christ himself handed on, offered by a Church that is his own Body.

Reverence for sacred space should form rather than replace interior conversion. The God worshiped in the Church also desires to make his people a holy dwelling and to unite their diverse gifts in communion.

Voices of the Church

St. Gregory of Nyssa, c. 335-c. 395

St. Gregory reads the tabernacle shown to Moses as a mystery whose deepest fulfillment is found in Christ. The heavenly pattern is not grasped merely by cataloguing materials. It directs the contemplative reader toward the incarnate Lord, in whom divine glory truly comes among humanity.

The Life of Moses II.170-188.

How this is cited. This is a summary of St. Gregory's extended interpretation in the cited section, not a direct quotation. His treatment is highly contemplative, so the summary states its central Christological movement without presenting every detail as binding exegesis.

For the group. Let the details lead the group toward wonder at Christ rather than toward speculative code-breaking.

St. Bede the Venerable, c. 673-735

In summary of his teaching, St. Bede reads the tabernacle as an image of the Church and of the faithful soul being formed into a dwelling for God. Diverse materials and roles are joined in one ordered house, so holiness includes both communion and personal conversion.

On the Tabernacle, Book 1.

How this is cited. The attribution and broad theme are secure, but this wording synthesizes material across Book 1 rather than pinning the claim to one short passage.

For the group. Ask whether each person's gifts are being offered to build communion or merely to secure attention.

St. Teresa of Avila, 1515-1582

St. Teresa asks her sisters to imagine the soul as a radiant castle with many rooms, at whose center the great King dwells. Her image is not an interpretation of Exodus' measurements. It is a Christian application of the astonishing truth that God desires to dwell within his people.

The Interior Castle I.1.1.

How this is cited. This is a faithful summary of St. Teresa's opening image. The connection to the Exodus sanctuary is our application, not a claim that she is commenting on Exodus 25 to 27.

For the group. Sacred space should awaken the deeper question of whether we welcome God's presence within us.

Live It This Week

Practices

1. Arrive at Mass at least ten minutes early. Put away your phone, acknowledge Christ's presence, and slowly pray Exodus 25:8 as a request that he make your heart ready for worship.
2. Offer one concrete gift for the building up of your parish or Catholic community. Choose time, practical skill, money, hospitality, music, setup, cleaning, or service to someone in need, and offer it without seeking recognition.
3. Make one small space in your room suitable for prayer. Place a Bible, crucifix, or sacred image there, and spend five minutes there on at least three days. The space does not contain God. It helps train your attention toward the God who desires to dwell with you.
4. Before receiving the Eucharist, consciously unite reverence and confidence. Remember that access is God's gift through Christ, then approach with gratitude rather than either casualness or fear.

Scripture Memory

Exodus 25:8

"And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst."

Exodus 25:8

Go Further in the Catechism

- CCC 1094. Old Covenant realities prefigure fulfillment in Christ.
- CCC 1179, 1197. New Covenant worship is not confined to one earthly place, because Christ is the true temple and Christians are living stones built into it.
- CCC 1180. Christians build churches, which are visible signs of God dwelling with a humanity reconciled in Christ.
- CCC 1181. A church is a house of prayer, a worthy place for the Eucharist celebrated and reserved there.
- CCC 1378. The Church adores Christ present in the Eucharist and reserves the sacrament reverently.

Before next session. Read Exodus 28:1-31:18 before we meet again.