

**The Re-dedication of St. Ignatius of Loyola Church
September 20, 2009**

Well, I suppose in honor of one of the shortest gospels of the year, the least I can do is offer one of the shortest homilies of the year. I will try my best—but you are a large, captive audience.

Sixty years ago, people very much like us, I suppose, gathered in this very space to offer themselves and this building to God. They made that offering and celebrated that first dedication not for themselves only, but for us. For countless thousands of people—also just like us—who have gathered here in prayer ever since. There are probably a few of us here today who can actually remember that day. A few might have been young adults; a few more, perhaps, were teen-agers or younger. And then there would have been the children. The children would have been uppermost in many minds that day. And the children should be today.

It is not really a building we celebrate today. It is people. People who dreamed, were doubtless frightened, fought, and finally had to finance what must have seemed a fantasy. And we sit under that fantasy's roof this morning. We who were children then, have our own children now. And the fantasy awaits another chapter—to be written in their lives.

The families who join us with their young children this morning belong

here with us—especially this morning. Yes, it gets a little noisier up here; yes there is at least slightly more fidgeting—at least until we get to the part where we have the parade with the smoking purse. I warned the children downstairs last week about that part. (That’s the solemn procession with incense that will shortly follow my words for you more serious adults.)

There is a special reason the children belong here today. The memory we celebrate today is not about the past, any more than the memory we celebrate in a few minutes at this altar is about the past. It is about the present—and about a future, a time 60 years *from* now when many of us will not be here to offer witness. But the commitment we make to each other today will perdure.

The commitment we make is not to a building, but to a God. Even Solomon’s majestic temple that we heard about today was destroyed not once but twice in the early history of Israel. And God was to abide there forever. Didn’t happen!

But the message goes out throughout the pages of the New Testament, the new Covenant, the new Promise: God does abide *with and in* God’s people. God does abide in the Body of Christ, the church.

St. Paul then frames a frightening question well: “Do *you* not know

that *you* are the temple of God?” Can you re-dedicate yourself to that temple?

Will you re-dedicate yourself to the gospel? Yes, even to today’s short gospel? Can we together re-dedicate ourselves to the reconciliation, forgiveness, and healing the gospel demands—before coming to the altar unrepentant and unforgiven ourselves? That is what really builds the building of God, builds the body of Christ. *That* is St. Ignatius church! Not the brick and mortar.

Or for another final question: “Do we build God a house in lieu of having God stay at ours?” In our hearts and minds and hands? (Barbara Taylor Brown, *An Altar in the World*)

We celebrate today the living temple of God in our midst. We celebrate the living body of Christ in stones made of flesh. We celebrate ourselves—and promise the children at least another 60 years. Ad Multos Annos! Amen!