

**DESTROY THIS TEMPLE, AND IN THREE DAYS I WILL RAISE IT UP.**

languages. Recently he taught at the Anglican Seminary in Cyprus. More recently, he was Theologian in Residence at our Diocese of Pittsburgh and he has taught at our Seminary, Nashotah, near Milwaukee. He quotes the famed George Orwell, best remembered for his anti-Communist satire, *Animal Farm*. Orwell was a man of letters with many interests. In an essay on the English language Orwell cited the beautiful metaphors found in the 1611 King James translation of Ecclesiastes 9:11:

I returned and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favor to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.

Orwell then "translates" this verse into what he calls "modern English". He moves from the stunning pictures of metaphor into the ice cold verbiage of concept.

Objective consideration of contemporary phenomena compels the conclusion that success or failure in contemporary activities exhibits no tendency to be commensurate with innate capacity, but that a considerable element of the unpredictable must invariably be taken into action.

Dr. Bailey adds, "If Western theologians had written the Bible it might have read like Orwell's passage. They didn't. Rather Middle Eastern metaphorical Theologians wrote the Bible." (May we add, "Thank Heaven?")

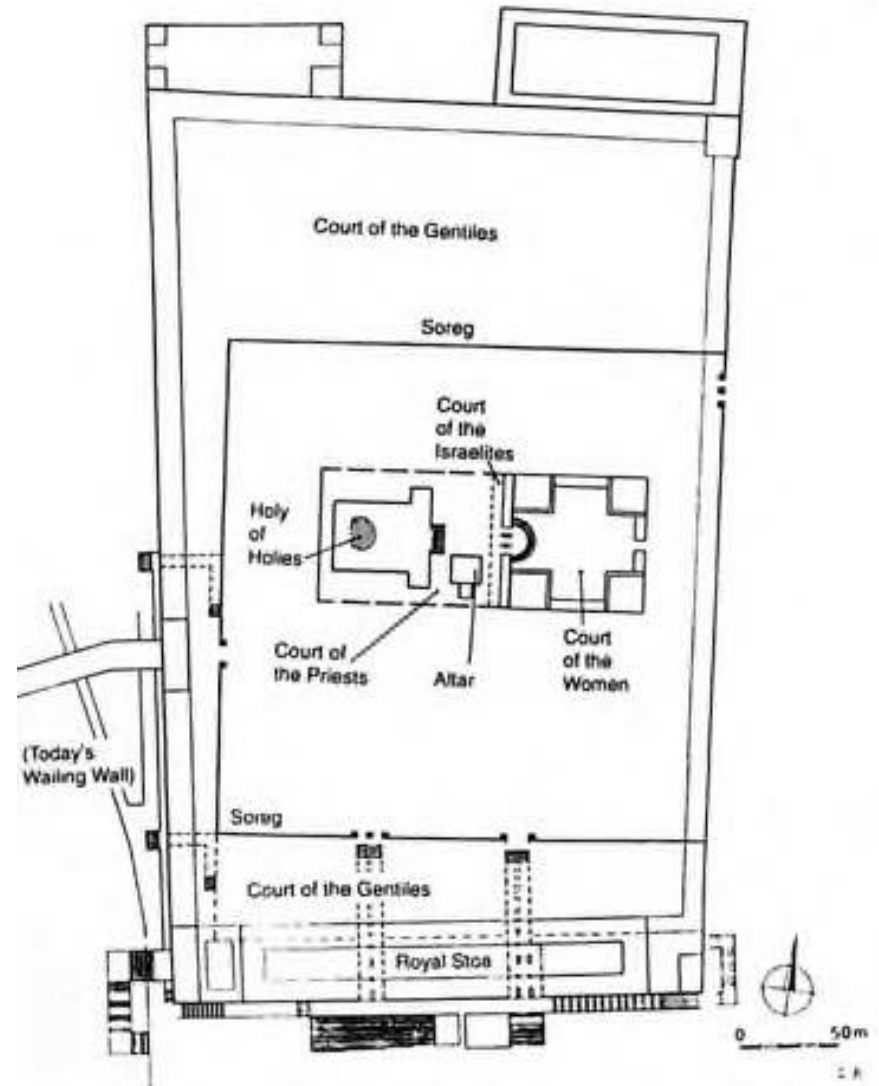
**Please prepare St. John 3:14-21 for next Sunday.**

**Lenten Solemn Prayer over the People**

*Deacon or Celebrant.* Bow down before the Lord.  
*All kneel*

*Celebrant.* Look mercifully on this your family, Almighty God, that by your great goodness they may be governed and preserved evermore; through Christ our Lord. **AMEN.**

**THE THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT**



The Jerusalem Temple in the time of Jesus

**DESTROY THIS TEMPLE, AND IN THREE DAYS I WILL RAISE IT UP.**

Today's Gospel St. John 2:13-22 [Year B, Lent 3]

✠ THE PASSOVER OF THE JEWS WAS NEAR, AND JESUS WENT UP TO Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the moneychangers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the moneychangers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, 'Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!' His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.' The Jews then said to him, 'What sign can you show us for doing this?' Jesus answered them, '**Destroy this temple**<sup>1</sup>, and in three days I will raise it up.' The Jews then said, 'This temple has been under construction for forty- six years, and will you raise it up in three days?' But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken. [© NRSV]

### Jesus and the Temple

The Temple was a stupendous building, a vast, four-sided, marble, gold-gilded colonnade fully one hundred feet tall. It's form was a huge open patio, really a wall, that covered more than the size of 12 football fields. All but one of the several gigantic doors were sheathed with gold and silver plates. The remaining door, called *the beautiful gate of the temple*,<sup>2</sup> was solid Corinthian bronze. Some two dozen men were required to push it open every morning and shut it every evening. On top of the south end colonnade was a second building, a great basilica where the *Sanhedrin*, had its meet-

<sup>1</sup> See page 4

<sup>2</sup> See Illustration. It was the east door into the Court of the Women. The door filled the open gap that let into that Court.

### THE THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

ings, a group of 71 whose function was like unto our Supreme Court. In the north-center was a second building with two more patios. In one of them stood the great open-air altar where daily sacrifices were consumed by the ever burning fire. Behind the altar loomed the *Holy Place*, the Temple proper. It was a marble structure, 150 feet tall, decorated lavishly with gold. It's interior was hung with white, blue, scarlet and purple curtains. Three curtain-hidden major rooms housed the glories of the Faith: the holy of holies, the seven branched candlestick, the small gold altar where incense was burned, the table where the show bread was exhibited, a tiny spot "three fingers" high that was construed to be the place where creation began and, at one time until stolen in war, the Ark of the Covenant.

Jesus frequently visited the Temple. Even as a child he went yearly with Mary and Joseph. John says he once visited it with his disciples, where he walked in the Porch of Solomon in winter. The porch, said to be a fragment of Solomon's original temple, was the North/South colonnade on the right side of the picture. It lay just east of the Court of the women. As we hear in today's Gospel lesson he was in the temple for an act of cleansing that did not endear him to the merchants. Other accounts of his cleansing of the Temple mention that he would not let people walk through the complex. Scholars tell us that the Temple was used by merchants and others as a shortcut to get from the west to the east of the city and back. Imagine what a stir there would be if today at church someone strolled through the Eucharistic family at worship using the House of God as a commercial pathway. Jesus attacked irreverence toward his Father.

### A Thought On *Destroy this temple.*

Western people prefer to speak in concepts, but Middle Eastern people favor speaking in metaphors. Today Jesus tells the crowd, '**Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.**' *Temple* is a metaphor for Jesus. Scholar Kenneth Bailey was raised in the Middle East and is fluent in Near Eastern