

Wednesday Reflection

Title: Thinking *Catholic*

Date: November 9, 2025

ID: Feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica

Scripture: John 2:13-22

I refer to Henri De Lubac. Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man. Ignatius. 1988 (originally in French, 1947 and in English 1950). And Joel B. Green. The Gospel of Luke. William Eerdmans. 1997.

Text: St. John Lateran is Rome's cathedral. The feast works well in Year C, St. Luke's year. Luke's writings are a travelogue. The good news progresses from Galilee to Jerusalem. After the unification of languages on Pentecost, it goes from Jerusalem to Rome, the capital of the world. This feast encourages a reflection on a *catholic* church.

Henri De Lubac corrects my mistaken notion. I thought *catholic* meant the people worldwide who believe what I believe, who worship as I worship. *Catholic* communicates an organized religion, an institution, albeit sacramental. De Lubac invites us to think of a universal, mystical union. When raised on the cross, Jesus said he would draw ALL people (John 12:32). Paul says that Christ died for ALL (2 Cor 14-15). And Paul tells us that the Resurrected One offers salvation to ALL (Romans 5:19). Quoting *Lumen Gentium*, the Catechism reinforces the idea: "All men are called to this catholic unity of the People of God. . . . And to it, in different ways, belong or are ordered: the Catholic faithful, others who believe in Christ, and finally all mankind, called by God's grace to salvation" (para. 836).

De Lubac quotes heavyweights. Addressing the church, Augustine wrote, "You unite together the inhabitants of the city, the different people, nay the whole human race, by belief in our common origin, so that men not satisfied in being joined together. . . become. . . brothers" (p. 54/5). And he refers to Ambrose who says the church includes all people "whatever their origin, race, or condition" because the mission of the church is to unite all in Christ (p. 50). Christ's saving work established a mystical union of all peoples.

To the Gospel: St. John places the cleansing of the Temple at the beginning of Christ's ministry. In John, it follows the Lord's first messianic sign, changing water into wine. That miracle recalls Isaiah's dream of all people enjoying a feast with "pure, choice wine" (Isa 25:6). Then, John records the cleansing of the Temple. The other evangelists place it near Jesus's death. At the end, the cleansing is a cause of Jesus's rejection by his people. At the beginning, it represents Jesus's rejection of a religiosity tied to a particular place and associated with one nation. Scholar Joel Green wrote that the Temple modeled a segregated society through a layout of courts that separated Jews from Gentiles, men from women, clean from unclean, priests from non-priests (p. 646). De Lubac writes that "Every breach with God is at the same time a disruption of human unity" (p. 33). A new religiosity calls God's people to give witness to the unity of all people in the One God.

This week offers a reflection on being catholic. Let's keep two Pauline ideas in mind and heart. He appeals to a "new self" acting in the "image of its creator." The new self is inclusive because "Christ is all in all" (Col 3:10/11). It leads to Christ's goal when "God may be all in all" (1 Cor 15:28).