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One of the most fascinating places to see in Jerusalem is the Temple Mount. This is the ruins of the very Temple into which Jesus entered and cleansed at the end of today's Gospel, throwing out the money changers and those who bought and sold. Today, it appears little more than a massive platform, and yet it is the most recognizable aspect of the Jerusalem skyline. Sadly, the Temple Mount is mostly off limits to Jews and tourists alike. What was once the center of a Judaism is now relegated to just the Western Wall. And to this day, scattered around the other walls of the Temple Mount are enormous stones, laying end over end, as if they were pushed off their foundations just yesterday.

These are the same stones that fell one day in 70 AD, during the destruction of the Temple when the whole city of Jerusalem wept as the great pride and joy of Israel was burned by the Roman Legion. On that day, the Roman General Titus Andronicus ran into the burning Temple, through the inner court and all the way into the Holy of Holies, to see for himself what was behind the veil. He hated to see the Temple destroyed, believing that it would have been more glorious for Rome to save the Temple than to destroy this great artifact of Jewish history. He had to be forcibly removed to prevent him from being burned to death by the engulfing flames. History tells us that Jesus was right, and still bears witness to the truth of His prophecy that of the Temple *not one stone shall remain upon another*.

A distance from the Temple Mount, just outside of the Walls of the Old City is where the Upper Room is believed to be. It is a cold, stone hall, with little to no Christian symbols present. The only symbols apparent are from its time as a mosque, with a carving that points the direction to Mecca, and stained-glass windows featuring Arabic calligraphy. To the Christian pilgrim the Upper Room, the

site of the Last Supper, the room in which the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles, is appallingly bereft of symbolism or meaning. There is nothing there that would allude to the fact that two of our faith's greatest mysteries took place in that room. There is nothing in it that would remind us that the twelve disciples once hid there. It has been described as one of the most disappointing of all the holy sites in Jerusalem.

But for Christians, this should not be surprising. The Christian knows that Jesus is the fulfillment of all that the Temple and the Holy Sites point to by way of spiritual meaning and definition. That the Temple or the Upper Room are unremarkable should strike us as fitting. For it is not in external buildings or monuments that the Christian religion rises or falls. The Christian religion falls and rises in the Person of God's own Son made flesh, Jesus Christ. While some see ruins as cause for despair in a religious sense, perhaps we might be better served to see in the ruins a sign of a great truth. The Holy Spirit, after all, cannot be limited to any specific place, shrine, relic, or monument. Jesus wept over Jerusalem. He wept because His own people had missed out on the time of His spiritual visitation. His own people missed out on the Peace and Reconciliation with God the Father that Jesus works out in His death, resurrection, and ascension. And what greater gift is there than the Gift of the Holy Spirit which Jesus Christ and His Father share? The Spirit of life and of peace, the Spirit that can renew us and transform us into the image of Jesus Christ, all of this is what should be of greatest importance to us if we should become spaces and places of encounter with God. It was prophesied years before Jesus wept over Jerusalem, *Ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God, and none else: and my people shall never*

*be ashamed. And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh (Joel 3:27-28).*

For the Christian, this process of receiving the Holy Spirit begins with Baptism. We confess and believe that every baptized person has been made a member of Christ's Church, has received the gift of everlasting life, has died to sin and the world, and is a Temple of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, every parish church is also a Temple of the Holy Spirit and an Upper Room. [Consider this morning's baptism of William. William is a helpless infant, and yet we have prayed that he be given the Holy Spirit, that he be born again, that he receives the fulness of God's grace.] It is a mystery that [in one so small and] each one of us, is a Temple of the Holy Spirit. In us dwells that same Holy Spirit who moved upon the waters at Creation, who inspired the construction of Solomon's Temple, Who spake by the prophets, Who overshadowed the Blessed Virgin Mary at the Incarnation, and descended in tongues of fire upon the Apostles on Pentecost.

And just as the Holy Spirit is not defined by one central location or people, neither is the Holy Spirit one uniform experience or separate from all other areas of our lives. St. Paul outlines for us gifts of the Holy Spirit, reminding us that the Holy Spirit is not just confined to the supernatural, but to every area of our lives and intellect. Our faith is not a separate compartment of life, but a divine relationship which may ennoble all aspects of our experience. But for the Holy Spirit to be the conductor of that divine relationship which we are called to, for the Holy Spirit to sanctify all aspects of our experience, we must surrender ourselves completely to Him. We must keep the promises that we made or that were made for us at our Baptism, when the Church prayed for us to be received by Jesus Christ, to be released from sin, to be sanctified with the Holy Spirit, to be given the

Kingdom of Heaven, and everlasting life. We must keep our promises to renounce the devil and his works, the vanity and glory of the world, and all the covetous desires of the same and the sinful desires of the flesh, to not follow nor to be led by them, to keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of our life.

For if we do our best to keep all these promises, getting back up again when we fall, and confessing our sins, then we shall indeed be greater and grander Temples of the Holy Spirit than Solomon in all his splendor could have ever imagined. Amen.