

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

**The Temple and Renewal of the Earth** Fourth Week of Lent Tuesday, April 1, 2014  
8:15 AM **Ez 47:1-9, 12; Jn 5:1-3a, 5-16** (Jesus is inviting us into a new kind of covenant, a covenant in his blood, which is to bring life and wholeness and healing to the earth.)

Today we are dealing with the powerful imagery of the Temple. The Temple in Jerusalem was really built on a model that Moses had seen in vision. **The Temple** represented some imaginary way or **imaginative way of picturing God and also God's work**, which in a way, oddly, involved such things as a high priest. Why does God need a high priest? It's hard to say, but that's the vision. It's out of that vision that came the tabernacle, the dwelling that the Hebrew people carried through the desert. It's also the origin of the Temple itself when finally it was built of cedar. Later at the time of Herod it was built of stone and made quite massive. But the point is **it isn't really the building that's important; it's the idea behind it that's important.**

So Ezekiel now has a vision of the Temple, and in this vision **water is welling up**. Now people who live in arid lands value water far more than people living in the Midwest. We can have our fill of water, but in the ancient world people, especially in the arid lands, people didn't have their fill of water. They were always wanting water. Water was miraculous. Water was magical. So Ezekiel sees water flowing out of the Temple giving life, giving life to trees that would bear fruit all the time to give food and leaves that would be medicinal. So this is already **a prophecy of the renewal of the earth, the feeding of the hungry, and the healing of the sick, the coming of the Messianic kingdom**, if you will. In many ways **Messianism and prophecy and Temple mysticism** are conjoined, and by and large have very little to do with the Law and the actual Temple in Jerusalem and the government of the people, and so on. You could say it's **the life-giving properties of the Jewish religion.**

Now Jesus comes into the Temple, again, in the pool of Bethesda. Again, we have a Temple and we have water and we have healing. But it's on a sabbath. To get an idea of how the Law, the Torah, had taken over from everything else, these very sincere men are really disturbed because Jesus heals a poor soul, sick for thirty-eight years, on the sabbath. **The sabbath to them is more important than that poor ill, sick man would be healed.** So that tells you something of the power of that particular belief, a power Jesus will oppose, did oppose, and in a way actually became a victim of himself. If we are going to walk with Jesus on his way to Calvary, we have to understand precisely what is going on. We have to understand what he was directing himself to. **It was a new understanding of what God wanted, a new understanding of the will of God**—nothing less than that. And in breaking down the certainties of the leaders he risked a great deal for himself. That is all part of the workings of God among people. And it's through this, this risking of himself, that **Jesus is inviting us into a new kind of covenant, a covenant in his blood, which is to bring life and wholeness and healing to the earth.** And he hands this responsibility over to us to keep this memory of him. **That is why we gather for the Mass, to keep this in memory and to do it in memory** so that it will not be in vain.