

# Archbishop's Homily on Dedication of New Church

Reverend Monsignors,  
Rev. Fathers, Rev.  
Sisters, my dear brothers  
and sisters:

The first reading from the  
book of Nehemiah is  
admirably suited for  
today's celebration.



In the year 598 before Christ in a book Ezra, the Crown Prince of Babylon invaded Jerusalem and carried off the Jewish people into exile to Babylon for 60 years. Upon returning to Jerusalem the Jewish people of God did three things. They rebuilt the Altar of Sacrifice, rebuilt the temple and rebuilt and restored the walls surrounding the holy city of Jerusalem. In doing so, they encountered much opposition and many difficulties but they were strong in faith and God helped them. After rebuilding these three things, Ezra the scribe gathered the people together in a huge square near the Water Gate, for three reasons: (1) to thank God and to recognize that the rebuilding of their altar and temple were the work of the Lord. (2) to ask for God's blessing upon the newly rebuilt altar, temple and the walls and (3) the people might re-dedicate themselves to God and to renew their covenant with God. The covenant which said, "I shall be your God and you will be my people" and the celebration followed.

The event we celebrate today is so similar to that event described in the first reading, particularly in five ways. First of all, remember the people of God had just returned from exile and had come back from a far away country. The parishioners of this parish did not come from exile but most of them came from far away countries.

Secondly, upon their return from exile, the Jewish people saw the need to rebuild their altar, their temple and the walls of the holy city. And upon coming here from far away countries the parishioners of Canadian Martyrs Parish saw the need to

build a new parish and so after much searching, a land and a church were bought and the parish began in 1995. But soon after the parish had been established and the first church was blessed, it became clear that the church was simply too small for all the parishioners and a new and larger church and larger parish facilities were needed.

A third similarity is that in rebuilding their holy city, the Jewish people experienced much opposition and great difficulties but they had great faith and God helped them, so also the parishioners of Canadian Martyrs Parish. In planning for their future they were faced with great difficulties. The parish's share in the cost of the land was high and the cost of a new church was simply more than the parish could afford. But the people of God of this parish, like the people of God in the Old Testament, had faith in their God and they prayed for help. God answered those prayers by sending a generous benefactor who asked to remain anonymous but who gave a huge donation to the parish. With that donation and with the generosity and hard work of the parishioners, a new parish church and these new beautiful facilities became a reality.

A fourth similarity, upon completion and rebuilding of their altar, temple and the walls, the Jewish people gathered to give thanks to God, ask for God's blessing and to renew their commitment and their covenant to their God. Today we are also gathered here to thank God for this beautiful new church, to ask for God's blessing on these. Moreover, like the Jewish people, we were gathered to re-dedicate ourselves to God by renewing our covenant with our God that we shall be his people and that he will always be our God.

Finally the fifth similarity, after the Jewish people had renewed their covenant with God, as we are told, not to be sad any longer but to be happy and to celebrate. So I today, taking the place of Ezra, say to you this day is sacred to the Lord your God. Be full of joy and celebrate. Go eat rich foods and drink sweet wines for this day is sacred to the Lord. God bless you all.