



November 9, 2025

Dedication of the Lateran Basilica

"...you [all] are the temple of God." 1 Corinthians 3:21



Dear Friends,

We began this month with the celebration of All Saints and All Souls. These feasts remind us that the Church is the body of believers living and dead who are the living temple of the Risen Christ. Today we honor a church that counts world within its parish boundaries.

The Basilica of St John Lateran is the cathedral of the Diocese of Rome. The word 'cathedral' comes from the word cathedra which means chair. The chair of the Bishop of Rome is located in St John Lateran. One of the ceremonies that installed Leo XIV as pope took place here. Leo was seated on the bishop's cathedra (chair) and formally installed as Rome's bishop. One of the responsibilities of the pope as bishop of Rome is to maintain the communion of the whole Church. So, in a sense St John Lateran is the spiritual home of Catholics everywhere.

The earliest Christians met in homes. When that became too dangerous in Rome during persecutions, they met secretly in underground cemeteries called catacombs. This did not change until fourth century when Christianity was officially recognized as a legal cult in the empire.

The Emperor Constantine gave large gifts of property to the church of Rome. Among them was a palace and grounds that had once belonged to the Laterani family (hence the name). Later in 324 AD he added a large rectangular building that could be used for large public gatherings. It was called a basilica, which literally means, a building for a king. It was to be a Christian church and was called the Basilica of our Savior.

Legend says that that same year the basilica was dedicated on November 9. The baptistry which was in an attached structure was dedicated to St John the Baptist. Generations later the whole building was thought to be dedicated to John. So, the whole complex came to be known as St. John of the Lateran. For centuries the popes lived in the attached living quarters. The Lateran Basilica reminds us of our heritage. It is filled with Christian relics. The high altar is located over a wooden table on which it is said St Peter celebrated the Lord's supper with the early Christian community of Rome.

In our second reading from the First Letter of St Paul to the Corinthians, Paul uses the image of a building or temple to speak of the image of the community of faith. He speaks to the community in Corinth. He tells them that they are "*God's building*" and a "*temple of God*." In the Greek Paul uses the second person plural, meaning that together we form the living temple. The person who goes it alone destroys the unity of God's temple. Our reading from John's Gospel tells us that Christ is the living temple of God. In his resurrection we become his risen body and a temple of the Holy Spirit.

Today we celebrate not a building but a loving God who provides a home for us on earth and in heaven. We build up that temple by making sure all are welcome and have a safe haven, where God's reconciling love heals us and unites us. During this Jubilee Year of Hope, let us be that safe place where all are loved.

Peace,

Fr Ron

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