

Connecting the Dots

The Archbasilica of St. John Lateran in Rome is the mother and head of all churches in the world. While most Catholics are more familiar with St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican, it is actually St. John Lateran that is the cathedral of the Pope as Bishop of Rome. Every bishop has a cathedral, the church where his cathedra—his official chair—sits. For the Pope, that cathedral is St. John Lateran.

The basilica was first dedicated in 324 A.D. by Pope Sylvester I, after Emperor Constantine donated the Lateran palace grounds to the Church. Its full title is The Archbasilica of the Most Holy Savior and of Saints John the Baptist and John the Evangelist at the Lateran. The dedication of this building is one of the oldest feasts celebrated universally in the Church.

Throughout history, the Lateran Basilica has endured fires, earthquakes, and invasions. Yet it has always been rebuilt and rededicated, standing as a symbol of the Church's resilience and unity. This is what we celebrate today, not the building, but what the building symbolizes, Our Church.

We have three versions of Church in our readings: as a temple with a river of grace flowing out from it, as a structure of real people, and as the Resurrected Body of Christ. As we reflect on these lessons, we tend to look at the Church historically, universally, figuratively. And these are admirable pursuits. But what do these images have to do with us, sitting in the pews of this 50-year-old building?

How do we connect the dots from Ezeckiel and Paul and John to Father Charlie, Father Alex, and Bishop Mark? First, would we want to do that? I mean what benefit to our Faith Journey would result? What possible lesson could be realized from examining the early Church? Would the answers bring us closer to Christ? Would Grace be increased?

Speaking from experience, I say most certainly all of the above and I emphasize that such an endeavor is totally worthwhile. This Church of ours, this Church of Jesus has a rich and beautiful heritage. There are issues, but

they are dealt with. There are personalities and they too are dealt with. You see, Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit will be there to guide and inform.

The Spiritual Situation of the early Christians is not that different from the Spiritual situation in which we find ourselves in today. Let that sink in. To help you, recall that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. The Holy Spirit was alive in the acts of the Apostles and is alive here at St. Jude. There is a connection, and it is awesome to think about and discuss.

That is why we are continuing the Focusing Our Faith ministry. Focusing Our Faith is what we call our groups of Parishioners who come together once a Month to learn and share our Catholic Faith. We are about to embark on a grand journey that will immerse us in the wonderful Gift of the Church. Jesus said, "You are Peter and upon this Rock I will build my Church." And he did.

Our Church is the way Jesus chose to carry on his work of salvation, redemption and grace. Without the Church ... Well, I can't help but think that the Jesus Story would be lost in antiquity. What an unimaginable loss! And so, we are bringing our attention to how the Church was born and how it grew. We hope that by recalling the early events you will come to a deep appreciation of what God has done for us in giving us the Church. Additionally, we believe that by recalling the zeitgeist of the early Christians you will bring that zeal for Christ into our world of today. You are invited to explore how the lessons of Paul and Acts apply to St. Jude Parish and to your individual Faith.

Our format is the same as when we met to focus on the presence of Jesus during the Eucharistic Revival. The Deacons and Father will present 10 – 15-minute videos sparking discussion and Faith Sharing. These videos will follow the Acts of the Apostles in Historic context from the year 33 to the year 67 when Paul wrote his final letter.

This Month we are opening up our groups to invite more Parishioners to share in the magic that small groups engender. There are sign-up sheets in be back. Please choose a time and place that fits your schedule and buckle up! Our first session will begin in December. As always, we are looking for more

Facilitators so if you feel that you are called in that way, please see me after Mass. Training is available.

I close with the words St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians during his second Missionary Journey:

*You are God's building.
According to the grace of God given to me,
like a wise master builder I laid a foundation,
and another is building upon it.
But each one must be careful how he builds upon it,
for no one can lay a foundation other than the one that is there,
namely, Jesus Christ.*

Connect the Dots!