

THE DEDICATION OF THE LATERAN BASILICA

YOU ARE GOD'S BUILDING

This Sunday we have gathered in joy and faith to celebrate together this great feast of the Lateran Basilica.

But why is this feast so important, and how does it involve us as Catholic Christians?

Well, this feast has its origins in the 4th century, when Constantine donated his palace to build the first Cathedral Church of the Catholic Christians. Before this date, the first Christians did not have churches; they met in homes to pray together, to break bread, and to practice charity.

Since the 4th century, the Lateran Basilica has been the seat of the Bishop of Rome, that is, the Pope. Cathedra signifies the place from which the Pope teaches, governs, and sanctifies his Church.

Many believe the Pope's seat is St. Peter's Basilica, but this is not the case; his seat is the Lateran Basilica. Therefore, at the entrance to this Basilica, there is an inscription that reads: "This Church is the mother and head of all churches."

As the seat of the Bishop of Rome, whom we recognize as head of the Catholic Church, all Christians in our Church join in the joy of Christians for this sacred place today.

This Basilica, like all temples, churches, and cathedrals, are a spaces consecrated to the Lord and intended for encountering Him. In this way, a temple is an ideal space to build His other temple, which is His Church; that is, the community of believers, our family in faith.

This encounter with God marks the most important and significant moments of our lives: our baptism (birth into faith), our first communion or confirmation, a wedding; the Eucharist is celebrated every day, and we have space for the sacrament of confession and other sacraments.

Every church is a sign of a higher reality: Christ is the true Temple of God, being the head; and we, in him, are his body, which is the Church, the community of the baptized.

In the first reading, the prophet Ezekiel contemplates a river that is an image and symbol of God's life-giving love, and we receive that life in every church as a privileged space for encountering God.

Therefore, the Apostle Saint Paul, in the second reading addressed to the Corinthians, reminds us that we are the house that God builds; we are temples of God through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

Jesus, in the Gospel we heard from St John, wants to restore the holiness of the Temple, since it has been designated for another purpose.

Today, we are not immune to this reality. Often, we ourselves fail to respect the sanctity of our temples, churches, or cathedrals. This is due to our inappropriate behavior or attire, or because we do not respect the silence necessary for others to have that encounter with the God of love.

On this Sunday, the Lord's Day, we are first invited to give thanks for belonging to this family of faith. We must also value and care for our sacred spaces, but without forgetting that the greatest temple we must care for and value is our inner selves, for it is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. We are invited to live in God's grace and to respond to the love with which we have been loved. Let us ask Mary, the Most Holy Spouse of the Holy Spirit, to watch over her Church as our Mother and teach each of us to value these sacred spaces for our intimate encounter with the Lord. Amen.