

## **Feast of the Dedication of the Basilica of St. John Lateran**

The Basilica of St. John Lateran, in Rome, whose feast we celebrate today, is the cathedral of the Pope as Bishop of Rome. Built by the Emperor Constantine, in the time of Pope Sylvester I, it was consecrated in the year 324. It is called “the mother church of all the churches of Christendom,” and it is the symbol of the communion of the Churches throughout the world, united around the successor of Peter.

The Feast of the Dedication of the Basilica of St. John Lateran invites us, therefore, to become aware that the Church born of Jesus—whom the Basilica of St. John Lateran symbolizes and represents—is today, in the midst of the world, the “dwelling place of God,” the living witness of the presence of God in the historical journey of humanity. But we are also invited to make each one of us the true temple of God.

In the first reading, the prophet Ezekiel tells us that from the house of God there will flow a river of living and abundant water that will pour out over all the land of Israel. This water will make the desert fruitful, cause trees of every kind to grow, laden with edible fruits and with healing leaves that will be a remedy against death. The people of God, made alive by the water that springs from the dwelling of God, will know abundant life and unending happiness.

With these images, the prophet invites us to make our temples, our churches, places where the Christian meets God, quenching himself with His love, with His grace, in order to share forgiveness and peace in the world, thus sharing the “life in God” with our brothers and sisters. Our churches must be places of encounter with God, places where, through our prayer, we listen to the Word of God and welcome His love into our hearts, becoming ourselves sources of tenderness and peace; otherwise, they do not fulfill the mission for which they were built. May our temples be places of prayer, places of listening to God, places of encounter with our brothers and sisters, places where we quench our thirst for the Infinite, for Life, and from which we go out to proclaim this “Life,” which is God, to the world.

Meanwhile, in the second reading, Paul reminds us that the true “temple” of God is ourselves. Therefore, we must always respect our body and the body of our brothers and sisters. Animated by the Spirit, who dwells in each one of us as His temple, Christians are called to live according to a new dynamism, bearing witness to the goodness and mercy of God in the midst of their brothers and sisters. Saint Paul says: “The temple of God is holy, and you are

that temple.” Let us be a temple inhabited by the Holy Spirit, using our body for good, always for good.

In the Gospel, the episode of the expulsion of the merchants from the temple by Jesus is described. In this episode, Jesus affirms two important things:

1. The temple of God must always be a place of prayer, and not of business, of exploitation of others, or of speaking ill of others.
2. However, the “true temple” where God wishes to dwell is our body, as we heard in the second reading. And Jesus, for this reason, presents Himself as the true temple of God, that temple which men will try to destroy when they condemn Him to death, but He will rebuild that temple three days later, with His resurrection.

Let us therefore make our churches places of prayer, places of encounter with God and with our brothers and sisters, and above all, let us see in each one of us the true temple of God, knowing that any offense against our brother or against ourselves is an offense against God Himself, who dwells in us.

AMEN.