

Dedication of John Lateran

Today we celebrate a feast that rarely occurs on Sunday: *The Dedication of the Basilica of St. John Laternan*. St. John Laternan, a church that dates from the fourth century, is the Cathedral Church of Rome. Although few of us have seen this great church, we celebrate its dedication as a way of showing our unity with the Bishop of Rome, Pope Francis. This feast also reminds us of the importance of our own church in which we worship every week. It reminds us that this church is a sacred space made holy by the presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, a space where we encounter the Lord in silence and in prayer, in worship and in praise.

When I enter this church my eyes goes immediately to the sanctuary light above the tabernacle that reminds me that Christ is present here. When I enter this church I see the altar where we celebrate the Eucharist every day, proclaiming the death of the Lord until he comes again. When I enter this church I see the angels that look down upon us as we worship, and I imagine this church being filled with countless hosts of angels who worship and pray with us.

But in addition to reminding us of our own church, this feast reminds us that we are in union with millions of other Catholics throughout the world who are in also in union with the Bishop of Rome, Francis our Pope. This feast reminds us that the Church is greater than the parish of St. Mary's or the Archdiocese of Hartford. The Church is a world-wide communion, and every time we celebrate

this Eucharist we are in communion with Catholics throughout the world: with Catholics in Asia, Australia, Africa, Europe and South America.

Finally, this feast reminds us that the church is not merely a building; it is a living organism. St. Paul tells us that we are the Temple of God's Holy Spirit when he writes, "Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" Jesus reminds us that the church is his body when he presents himself in today's gospel as the new temple, the dwelling place of God.

Every time we gather to celebrate this Eucharist we become the church, the temple of the living God. Every time we gather to worship as a community of believers, we become the body of Christ. Every time we celebrate the mass, we are a temple of living stones built on the foundation of Christ. The church is more than a building. The church is a living organism, the temple of God's Spirit, the Body of Christ. We are the church every time we gather to worship.

People ask me, "Why do we attend mass every week? Instead of answering their question, I ask another. If we are the body of Christ, why wouldn't we gather every week to celebrate the Eucharist? If we are the temple of God's Spirit why wouldn't we celebrate this Eucharist week after week? We attend mass every week because we are the Temple of God; we are the body of Christ.