

Today the Church celebrates the feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica in Rome. The Basilica of St. John Lateran is the cathedral of Rome and is the Popes's cathedral as the Bishop of Rome. This is not to be confused with St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican.

The Lateran Basilica was also called the Church of St. John the Baptist and was the baptism church of ancient Rome. It was built in the time of Constantine and was consecrated by Pope Sylvester in the year three hundred and twenty four. This feast became a universal celebration in honour of the basilica called "the mother and mistress of all churches of Rome and the world" as a sign of love for and union with the our Holy Father the Pope.

Initially the observance of this feast was confined to the city of Rome; then, beginning in fifteen sixty five, it was extended to all the Churches of the Roman rite. The honouring of this sacred church was a way of expressing love and veneration for the Roman Church, which, as St. Ignatius of Antioch says, "presides in charity" over the whole Catholic community.

Our readings today use images of the temple and recalls the essential truth that the temple made of stones is a symbol of the living Church, our Christian community. In their letters the apostles Peter and Paul understood the church as a "spiritual edifice," built by God with "living stones," namely, Christians themselves, built upon the one foundation of Jesus Christ, who is called the "cornerstone".



We hear the words of St. Paul in our second reading today, "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? ... For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple."

The beauty and harmony of the all the Catholic churches throughout the world give praise to God also draws all people, limited and sinful, to convert to form a well-ordered structure, in intimate communion with Jesus, who is the head of the Church. This happens in a culminating way in the Eucharistic liturgy, in which the "Church" that is, the community of the baptized, come together

in a unified way to listen to the Word of God and nourish themselves with the Body and Blood of Christ.

From these two tables the Church of living stones is built up in truth and charity and is internally formed by the Holy Spirit transforming herself into what she receives, conforming herself more and more to the Lord Jesus Christ. She herself, if she lives in sincere and fraternal unity, in this way becomes the spiritual sacrifice pleasing to God.

Today's feast celebrates a mystery that is always relevant: God's desire to build a spiritual temple in the world, a community that worships him in spirit and truth. This feast also reminds us of the importance of the material buildings in which the community gathers to celebrate and praise God. Every community therefore has the duty to take special care of its own sacred buildings, which are a precious religious and historical legacy for future generations.

So our parish Church is made up of both living stones, you the parishioners of this parish, and also clay bricks which give us a place to come together to worship God. Both are important and we must build up and maintain both dimensions of our Church the living stones and the bricks and mortar of our Church.

Never before in the history of the Church has the absolutely essential role of the layperson been so dramatically emphasized as it is now. Particularly since Vatican II, the Church has called for a renewal in the life and role of the laity. Yet among the faithful, there remains a fundamental lack of understanding of the lay vocation and its role in the Church's mission. For many, there is a notion that the only real vocation in the Church is the ordained deacon, priest, bishop or religious brothers and sisters. They believe "the Church" is the ordained office and only people in habits or collars are called to serve. Many think that the role of the laity is to help out around the parish and that they are not called to play an integral part in the mission of the Church.

But in fact, the actual teaching of the Church is that lay people have a distinct and very real role in the spreading of the Gospel, which the Church desperately needs them to carry out with the authority, creativity, and power that the Holy Spirit has given them in Baptism. The Church teaches that in dignity lay people are absolutely equal to those in ordained and religious life. In mission, the work of the laity is the crucial means by which the world is to encounter Christ.

Many lay Catholics would like to be more involved, but do not have a clear understanding of their role in the Church. Today I want to help define your role as lay persons in the Church today and implore you to take up the responsibility entrusted to you by the Church to build up both the living stones and brick and mortar of the holy temple of God.

In my homily two weeks ago I mentioned the precepts of the Church, one of which was, "You shall help to provide for the needs of the Church." The needs of the church are many and varied and it is your responsibility to meet them. For over two years I have published in our bulletin our estimated weekly costs and the income from the previous week's collection. All this time our weekly collection has fallen about 25 % short of our expenses and you just choose to ignore the fact.

I must tell you today that every single one of you must increase your weekly contributions by 25% or we cannot continue to pay our bills. Every year we incur a \$50,000 deficit which is depleting our cash reserve. You would not be so irresponsible with your finances at home or you would lose your house.

This community is a parish family. You are not visitors here. You have responsibilities here and you must accept them.

Apart from a financial need the parish also has many other needs which is your responsibility to meet. It is your responsibility to evangelize and bring people into the church. It is your responsibility to provide altar servers and people to train them. It is your responsibility to prepare for ministries in which you have offered to serve. It is your responsibility to come to church on time. You know what times Mass starts - you know how long it takes for you to get here from your home - be here on time.

At the end of September I asked for three volunteers from each parish to fill a role of "Facility Supervisor" - no one replied except a few people who already are overworked in their service to the parish. We need people to take responsibility for our facility to ensure it is safe and clean - to ensure that when groups want to use the facility they have what they need and that everything is put away after an event and stored away properly.

Seventy five year old women should not be putting up tables and chairs for events. They have already put in over a half century of service on your behalf.

I will be either approaching you myself, or have someone approach you on my behalf, to provide much needed services to our parish community. I need you to accept our invitation to serve. Perhaps it would even be better for you to approach me and ask, "How can I help".

Today as we celebrate the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica as a sign of our dedication to our church, let us all appreciate the great gift of our church and all - not just a few - work together to build up both the living stones and the stones made of clay and mortar so that there will be a viable legacy for generations to come. May God continue to bless you and our parish.