

Homily Summary – Feast of St. John Lateran (2025)

Overview: The Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome is the Pope's cathedral and the mother church of all churches in the world. This feast reminds us that the Church is not only a physical building but a living temple of God's presence, made up of His people united in Christ. Our faith teaches us that sacred spaces matter because they are where the family of God gathers to meet Him, to hear His Word, and to receive His grace in the Sacraments.

1. Why We Celebrate This Feast

- The Basilica of St. John Lateran is the cathedral of the Bishop of Rome, the Pope, and symbolizes the unity of the universal Church.
- Built by Emperor Constantine and dedicated by Pope Sylvester I in the 4th century, it was the first public Christian church in history after Christianity was legalized.
- The Lateran Basilica represents the unity of all Catholics around the world as one family in Christ.

2. We Are One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic

- Each time we profess the Nicene Creed, we declare our belief in the one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church.
- "Catholic" (Greek: *katholikos*) means "universal" - the Church embraces all peoples and cultures.
- Jesus prayed for unity among His followers:
"That they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You" (John 17:21).
- The Church is the "pillar and foundation of truth" (1 Timothy 3:15).

3. Why Buildings Matter to God

- In Scripture, God commanded the building of sacred spaces - the Ark, the Tent of Meeting, the Temple — as places where His presence would dwell.
- Jesus Himself went weekly to the synagogue and Temple to pray and worship (Luke 4:16).
- God is present everywhere, but He chooses to be especially present in places dedicated to His worship.
- Our church buildings are not just halls - they are houses of prayer, love, and encounter with God.

4. Our Own Parish as a House of Prayer

- Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish is our local "house of God." Each of us has a responsibility to make it a place of welcome, compassion, and worship.
- Jesus said, "My house shall be called a house of prayer" (Matthew 21:13).
- We strengthen our community by showing hospitality, reverence, and care for our sacred space.
- *Semper reformanda* - the Church is always reforming - not by changing Christ's teachings, but by growing deeper in understanding and holiness. God's Word doesn't change with culture — it is the world that needs to change to align with Christ.

5. Becoming the Living Temple

- By baptism, each of us becomes a living stone in the spiritual temple of the Church (1 Peter 2:5).
- We are called to reflect Christ in our families, workplaces, and communities - being sources of light, peace, and unity.
- Each time we receive Holy Communion, we are strengthened to become what we receive — the Body of Christ.

6. The Sacraments: Encounters with God

- Through the Church, we receive God's Word and His Sacraments - visible signs of His invisible grace.
- In particular, the Sacrament of Reconciliation restores us when sin damages our relationship with God.
- Every time we enter a church, we enter a place where Heaven and Earth meet

Key Bible Verses

- **John 17:21** – "That they may all be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I in You."
- **1 Timothy 3:15** – "The Church of the living God is the pillar and foundation of truth."

- **Matthew 21:13** – “My house shall be called a house of prayer.”
- **1 Peter 2:5** – “Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house.”
- **Hebrews 13:8** – “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”

Reflection Questions

1. Do I recognize that I am a “living stone” in the Church - part of Christ’s body at work in the world?
2. How do I help make my parish more of a “house of prayer,” love, and welcome?
3. Do I approach Mass and the Sacraments as real encounters with the living God?
4. Am I helping to build unity in the Church - beginning with my own community?
5. How can I imitate Mary’s humility and openness to God in my life this week?

Rhyme summary: The Lateran Basilica stands tall and true, the Pope’s own Church for me and you. Its stones remind the world to see, *we’re One Holy Church, One family*. We’re called to serve, reform, and grow, to share His peace wherever we go. The world needs God - His truth, His light; so let’s be Christ’s Church, shining bold and bright.

Some Scriptural reasons to come to Mass each weekend

Exodus 20:8 - "Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy."

Acts 2:42 - "They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."

Hebrews 10:24-25 - "And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

Luke 22:19 - "Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’"

John 6:53-54 - "So Jesus said to them, ‘Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day.’"

Matthew 18:20 - "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

Psalms 122:1 - "I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the Lord!’"

Colossians 3:16 - "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God."

Additional resources to learn more about God and the Catholic faith

- Check out the resource list available on www.frmerkley.com
- Catholic Answers: <https://www.catholic.com/>
- Word on Fire: <https://www.wordonfire.org/>
- Formed: <https://formed.org/>
- The Coming Home Network: <https://chnetwork.org/>
- Catholic Exchange: <https://catholicexchange.com/>
- Dynamic Catholic: <https://dynamiccatholic.com/>
- The Augustine Institute: <https://augustineinstitute.org/>
- Ascension Press: <https://ascensionpress.com/>
- EWTN: <https://www.ewtn.com/>
- The Catholic Company: <https://www.catholiccompany.com/>
- Busted Halo: <https://bustedhalo.com/>
- CatholicCulture.org: <https://www.catholicculture.org/>
- The Thomistic Institute: <https://thomisticinstitute.org/>
- Ignatius Press: <https://www.ignatius.com/>
- Catholic Education Resource Center (CERC): <https://www.catholiceducation.org/>