

# LITURGY BYTES

## November Feasts

This week on November 9<sup>th</sup>, the Church celebrates the feast of the dedication of the Lateran Basilica in Rome. It is the oldest and highest ranking of the four major basilicas in Rome. The Basilica of St. John Lateran is the cathedral of the diocese of Rome, the official ecclesiastical seat of the Holy Father, the Bishop of Rome. Most people think that St. Peter's Basilica is the official seat, but that is incorrect.

The Basilica is also called the Church of the Holy Savior or the Church of St. John the Baptist. In ancient Rome this was the church where everyone was baptized. It is the oldest church in the West, built in the time of Constantine and was consecrated by Pope Sylvester in 324.

Initially, the observance of this feast was confined to the city of Rome; then, beginning in 1565, it was extended to all the churches of the Roman rite. The honoring of this sacred edifice 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 communion. (Romans 1:1)

This magnificent building stands on land that was given to the bishops of Rome by the Emperor Constantine. It was during his reign that the laws restricting the practice of the Church's faith were removed from Roman law and eventually became the favored religion of the Roman emperor. One of the neat features of the Basilica are monumental statues of the 12 Apostles that stand as if they are supporting the ceiling of the church. Larger than life and full of dramatic intensity, the sculptures show the Apostles holding the instruments of their martyrdom. The Apostles are represented not as they were on earth but how they are in heaven. Remember, the faith we profess is the Apostolic faith. We believe and practice the faith that the Apostles believed and practiced. St. John Lateran shows our connection to the Apostles in stone.

This 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 the praises of God. Every community has the duty to take special care of its own sacred buildings, which are precious, just as our parish family continues to do with our sacred space here, which we call the Church.



Have a safe, healthy, and blessed week! ~~ *Michele Hahn*