

Dedication of the Lateran Basilica

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Today, we remember and celebrate the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica, the Cathedral of the Diocese of Rome where the Pope, the Bishop of Rome, presides. It is known as the Mother and Head of All Churches of the City and of the World.

The three Readings today bring out the meaning of the word ‘Church’. The Church is not just a building or an institution but it is the collective ‘us’, the union, *ecclesia* among each other, and with God. The First Reading, the Vision of the Prophet Ezekiel, beautifully portrays how the water from the sanctuary thrives wherever it flows. The Water is the symbol of the Grace of God through the Holy Spirit. It originates from the sanctuary pointing to God, the source of life. The Living Water waters everything along its path, causing new life to start and refreshes everything. This water flows through the region of Arabah, the barren desert in the Jordan Valley into the Dead Sea. The word, *Arabah*, in Hebrew means wasteland. This passage symbolizes the spiritual transformation of the Dead Sea, from the spiritual death of the people of Israel, to one of life.

The water from the Sanctuary has healing and transformative powers. The river itself flows into the dry Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea that are naturally too salty to support life. However, the water from the Temple makes the salty water fresh and pure, causing an abundance of fish and all kinds of living creatures to flourish wherever the river flows. This is what happens with the new Temple of God that is the Church. The Holy Spirit flows like living water from the mystical Body of Christ, the Church, and gives its faithful new life, immersing all believers in the fullness of grace. Thus the Living Water, the Holy Spirit, keeps the Church and every member on the path of Holiness.

The Holy Spirit works in our weakness. The outcry of Jesus in the Gospel was: “Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father’s house a marketplace!” It is a call to turn back to God and become united with the Father. With the help of the Holy Spirit, the Living Water, a spiritual cleansing and awakening should happen within us. Spiritual



cleansing is the process and path to reach God. The Holy Spirit helps us to discard and cast out the things that hinder our communion with God, and with our brothers and sisters.

Today, St. Paul also teaches us about our Body as the Temple of God. With this knowledge, we understand the importance of preserving the sanctity of our body because we are God's Temple and God's Spirit dwells in us. St. Augustine's views on this passage are interesting. He introduces us to the idea of *Stewardship*. Caring for the body is a form of stewardship and reverence for this gift from God. The body as the place where the soul resides and through which one serves God, should be maintained so the soul can perform virtuous acts and fulfill its duties to others. It means that the body should be free from all the evil of the world, and that the body must be treated with respect to glorify God. So, as we care for our bodies by selecting and consuming healthy food, and engaging in regular physical exercise, we should also receive spiritual nourishment and practice spiritual exercises to keep our bodies and soul as healthy Temples of God.

In his Theology of the Body, St. John Paul II held the body up as a 'sign' which through its physicality and actions perceive and experience God's love and mystery of *Being*: "The body, in fact, and only the body, is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and the divine. It has been created to transfer into the visible reality of the world, the mystery hidden from eternity in God, and thus to be a sign of it."

The sacraments, especially the Sacrament of Reconciliation, are the pathways of receiving the lost holiness of our spiritual life and making us ready to return to receive the Grace of God.

Let us, then, pray to our Lord to splash the Living Water into our hearts, for a spiritual awakening; for our repentance and reconciliation with God and with our brothers and sisters.