

Chaplain's Bulletin November 9, 2025



Dear Folks,

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Dedication of the Basilica of St. John Lateran. You may be asking why the Catholic Church is making such whoop-de-do about the dedication of some old church building? I'm glad you asked.

First, we remember that the church building is a symbol of the real Church, who is us.

St. John Lateran is the cathedral of the Catholic Church. The word "cathedral" is from the Greek for "Cathedra" meaning "chair" Jesus said in Matthew 23:2-3 that the scribes and Pharisees sat in the chair of Moses, so their authority should be respected, even though their conduct was abominable. (If you know your history, you know that Catholics have had a good deal of opportunity to apply this teaching through the years).

Some people have said that they believe in Jesus but not the Church. This leads me to wonder where they get their Jesus, because it can't be from the Bible. In the Gospels Jesus begins by calling people together, and He says that He will build His Church (Matthew 16:18) and expected that the Church would be there to help keep us working together.

The Scriptures compare the Church to a body (1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, and Ephesians 1:22-23 and Ephesians 4:11-16), and to a temple (Ephesians 2:19-22 and 1 Peter 2:4-5).

I find the image of the body especially interesting. The various parts are very different, but have compatible genetic structure, and if my rudimentary biology is correct, they agree on certain antigen proteins so they recognize each other as belonging. This can break down when there is an autoimmune disease that causes the body to attack itself. 1 Corinthians 1:10-16 talks about factions in the early Church, and how dangerous that was. Some say diversity is our strength, and others say that unity is our strength. I say they are both half right. Having diverse points of view, styles of thinking, and backgrounds but being united in purpose and agreeing on essential teachings while cooperating with each other under the guidance of leadership makes us strong. I have put a lot of energy into teaching and encouraging people to deal with their differences in a charitable and productive way, and I think it is one of the most important tasks for this generation of the Church.

I believe God calls us to be Church so that we are forced to deal with each other. We have to deal with other people's ideas, concerns, needs, and perspectives. This draws us beyond ourselves and demands giving of ourselves in a deep way. It also means a lot of times things won't be done the way we want or the way we think they should be. That is part of the cost of discipleship.

Let us pray that we may work together so that we can be strong against our common enemy (Ephesians 6:10-17).

Blessings,
Fr. Jim