

DEDICATION OF THE LATERAN BASILICA



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today the universal Church celebrates the Dedication of the Archbasilica of the Most Holy Savior - better known as the Lateran Basilica - the cathedral of the Bishop of Rome, the Pope. Its full title proclaims it *omnium ecclesiarum urbis et orbis mater et caput*: mother and head of all the churches of the city and the world. Yet let us not be fooled by the grandeur of its five ecumenical councils, its ancient baptistery, or the relics of Sts. Peter and Paul preserved beneath the papal altar. The Lateran is not a museum of past glory; it is a living prophecy of what God is doing *now* in the midst of history, and especially in the humble reality of our parish.

The Church teaches us to read every feast through the lens of the Paschal Mystery. Let us open the Scriptures together. The prophet Ezekiel, in exile far from the ruined temple of Jerusalem, receives a vision that sustains the hope of Israel: "Then he brought me back to the entrance of the temple, and I saw water flowing out from beneath the threshold of the temple toward the east...Wherever the river flows, every sort of living creature shall live." Eight centuries later, on Good Friday, a Roman soldier pierces the side of the Crucified One, and "at once there came out blood and water." St. John, who witnessed it, understands: the true Temple is the Body of Christ. From His open side flows the river that irrigates the desert of humanity.

The Lateran Basilica was the first fruit of this river in history. Consecrated in AD 324 by Pope Sylvester I, it rose on the land donated by Emperor Constantine - land that had belonged to the Laterani family, stained by the blood of Nero's persecution. The ancient palace of power became the house of God. The octagonal baptistery, still standing, was the womb where thousands of catechumens - Jews, pagans, soldiers, slaves - were plunged into the death of Christ and rose to new life. The words carved above its doors still ring out: *Hic est locus ubi mortui vivunt et peccatores dimittuntur* - "Here is the place where the dead live and sinners are forgiven." Every baptism we celebrate in our parish font is a new Lateran; every child, every adult who passes through the waters repeats the miracle of the fourth century.

But the feast challenges us further. Jesus enters the temple of Jerusalem and overturns the tables: "Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" The Greek says *oikos emporiou* - a house of commerce. How often do we turn the Church into a marketplace of self-interest? We come to Mass to "get something," to feel good, to fulfill an obligation. We reduce the Eucharist to a private devotion instead of the wedding feast of the Lamb. We tolerate divisions - gossip, envy, factions - while the Lord cries out: "Zeal for your house will consume me!" This zeal is not moralism; it is the fire of Pentecost that burned in the martyrs and wants to burn in us.

Look at our parish through the eyes of the Apocalypse: "I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb." The final temple is not made of Lateran marble but of living stones - you and me. St. Paul shouts it to the Corinthians: "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" When we gather in the name of the Lord, the Lateran is built anew. When a husband asks forgiveness of his wife after God's Word has struck his heart, a column rises. When a teenager chooses chastity after hearing the Love of God proclaimed, the dome is lifted higher. When an elderly widow offers her suffering in union with the Lamb, the altar is consecrated.

We are not settled stones, but pilgrims. The Lateran was dedicated once, but the Church is dedicated *every day* in the concrete history of our families. The domestic church becomes an extension of the cathedral. The Virgin Mary, who can be invoked as *Domus Aurea*, the Golden House, teaches us how. She carried the Word in her womb, pondered it in her heart, and stood beneath the Cross where the Temple was consummated. May she obtain for us the grace to live the Dedication of the Lateran *today*. May the water from the side of Christ continue to flow through our parish, healing the wounded, raising the dead, and making all things new.

Peace,

