

Dear Friends,

This weekend we celebrate the feast of the dedication of the Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome. This Basilica was named for St. John the Baptist. The land was donated to the Church of Rome in 324. It is honored as the episcopal seat of the popes as bishop of Rome. This basilica is known as the "mother and head of all churches of Rome and the world." It was the residence of the popes from the 4th century until their moving to Avignon in 1309. It was the site of five ecumenical councils.

For us Roman Catholics the Basilica of St. John Lateran is one of the holiest sites on earth. Any pilgrimage to Rome ought to include a visitation to this basilica. In 2002 I had the great privilege of going to Rome and was deeply moved by the beauty and splendor of this great building.

While St. John Lateran inspires awe for those who see its splendor, it also inspires a profound sense of humility. From this basilica stems the living Church in the world today. Jesus once said, "I am the vine, you are the branches." Using this image of the vine with branches that grow around the world, it is possible to see that our own parish has its roots in the glorious splendor of this great basilica.

We tend to take so much about our faith for granted these days. It is rare for us to be deeply inspired and humbled by holy places like our own sanctuary. Yet, the tabernacle in our parish holds the same precious Body of Christ as the tabernacle of St. John Lateran. The experience of our worship here is the same Mass, the same sacrifices, the same expression of faith as any Mass celebrated around the world.

This feast is inspiring because it heightens our awareness of the unity we share as the Church in the world. It is not just the glorious buildings which symbolize power, stability and holiness. But it is what happens within our gathering to worship that makes us the Church. And she is a beautiful sight to behold.

In joyful hope,
Fr. Tim Seigel