

Sunday Homily  
Lateran Basilica in Rome A  
November 9, 2008

By Deacon Jeff Claar

Today we celebrate the dedication of the Lateran Basilica in Rome. We celebrate not a building for its own sake, but what this building symbolizes for anyone who calls themselves a Christian.

The Lateran Basilica, also known as St. John Lateran is the cathedral of the bishop of Rome, the pope. It was presented to the Church in 311 AD as part of a donation from the Laterani family and is considered the mother church of the Christian world. The Basilica was officially dedicated in 325 AD, and all of this is the same time that the Roman Emperor Constantine converted from paganism to Christianity. Constantine decreed Christianity the official religion of Rome; so all of a sudden people had the freedom to worship God without the fear of persecution.

Now we just talked about basilica, cathedral, and church. What do these mean? Let's take a quick look at each – and believe me, we will get to the message of the Scripture too!

A “*basilica*” comes from the Greek term for “*royal hall*”. Originally a term for official Roman buildings, it is now assigned to churches because of their antiquity, dignity, historical importance, or significance as centers of worship. A cathedral comes from the Greek term “*cathedra*” meaning “*chair*”, so a cathedral is the official church of a bishop. And the word “*church*” comes from the Greek term “*ekklesia*” which mean “*to come forth from*”. So there is our history lesson – now...

If “*church*” means “*to come forth from*”, just who is coming forth from where? This doesn't sound like a building at all, does it?

Let's look to our Scripture today to make sense of it.

Ezekiel has a vision of the temple to come. A living water flows from this temple and wherever it flows and whatever it touches is made fresh, new and alive.

In our Gospel Jesus infers that His Body is the temple and even though it will be torn down, He will rebuild it after three days. Of course, here he is misunderstood. The Jews thought Jesus was speaking of the building, but Jesus was speaking of His own Body.

St. Paul speaks plainly to us in no uncertain terms when he says, “You are God's building... and the Spirit of God dwells in you.” How exactly are we God's building, and what does this mean today?

Put the three together...living water...member of the Body of Christ...receive the Holy Spirit...yes, we are talking about our Baptismal call!

In Baptism, through the power of the Holy Spirit, we die to sin, and are reborn into the Body of Christ through the living water of the baptismal font. We become a member of Christ's church and we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And this living water makes us fresh, new and alive. We gain a share in Christ's mission as Priest, Prophet, and King and we are called to go forth and live this out in the world.

How are we to be Priest, Prophet, and King?

A priest is one who offers a sacrifice. We do not offer the same sacrifice as our priest, but we offer all that we are to our God, the good the bad and the ugly. We bring our hopes, and dreams, and sorrows and frustrations here to Mass and place them on the altar to be offered up to God.

A prophet is one who speaks the word of God. And we all know that actions speak louder than words! We are to take what we learn, and who we are, and be the hands of Christ in our families, our jobs, and our communities. Everyone should be able to tell we are Christian by our actions first.

A King is one who rules, who is rich, and who is mighty, right? Well, not our King. Christ the King, is a servant King, and we are to be of service to all in imitation to Him.

Yes, through the power of the Holy spirit received in our Baptism we are priest, prophet and king every day in the routines of our lives. We offer ourselves to be of service to all, for the greater glory of God.

This is what it means to be a member of the Body of Christ. This is who we are as Church. All the rest of it, as beautiful as it is, is just bricks and mortar.