



Immaculate Conception
Church

Homily for the Feast of Dedication of the Lateran Basilica

Year A 2014

A young priest was stationed at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. He was used to seeing tourists and visitors wandering about the church. But there was this one young man whom he had seen many times. He would just sit there, in the middle of the Church, staring all around...as if he were lost. The man always appeared very sad.

One day the priest decided to approach him. "What brings you here?" he asked. The young man looked up at the priest and said: "I'm here to find God." The priest thought for a moment, then asked, "Where did you lose him?" The man thought even longer, then laid his hand over his heart, and replied, "In here." The responded: "Then *there* is where you'll find Him."

The world is filled with many beautiful churches. One only has to think of a place like Notre Dame in Paris, St. Peter's in Rome, the Cathedral of SS Peter & Paul in Providence or even Immaculate Conception in Cranston. Among those beautiful churches is the Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome. Today we celebrate the dedication of that Basilica. We do this because this basilica is "the mother of all Catholic Churches" since it was the first Church created after the Emperor Constantine decreed Christianity to be the religion of Rome. But this feast isn't about admiring architecture or stained glass or vaulted ceilings. It is about much more. It is about us and who we are.

In the gospel Jesus says: "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in three days." People laughed at Him because they thought that he was planning on rebuilding the temple structure. Jesus was speaking about a far greater reality. He was speaking of a much more sacred temple. He was speaking about the temple of His Body.

On this Feast, St. Paul would remind us that we also are temples of God. The elegance of design, the wonder of stained glass, the dramatic sculptures and artwork...they are all beautiful. But they are made by people like you and me. We are not made by people but by God. Buildings can be destroyed, they don't last forever....but WE do.

Like the young man sitting in St. Patrick's Cathedral we need too find God within our own selves before we can spot him anywhere else. Look inward and see the goodness and the sacred dignity that God sees in you. Look inward and discover the many gifts and blessings the Creator has bestowed upon you. Look inward and immerse yourself in the love, mercy and forgiveness that God has given you in Christ. For on this Feast of St. John Lateran we should never forget who or what you are. For we are the living stones that fit together to form God's temple, God's church.