

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, November 9, 2025

The Dedication of the Lateran Basilica

This email, entitled Looking to Sunday®, focuses on one or more of the scripture readings for the coming Sunday. It prepares readers to hear God's Word at Mass and it offers a point of reflection to consider in the days leading to Sunday. Looking to Sunday is written by Father Tom Iwanowski.

Looking to Sunday has been published for more than sixteen years.

EVERYWHERE AND SOMEWHERE

This Sunday, the Catholic Church throughout the world celebrates the anniversary of the dedication of the Lateran Basilica, located in the City of Rome. The solemn dedication of that church took place some 1,700 years ago on November 9, in the year 324.

This anniversary is remembered because the Lateran Basilica, named in honor of St. John the Baptist and St. John the Gospel Writer, was the first church to be publicly dedicated in the history of Christianity. It was only a few years earlier that Constantine, the Roman Emperor, had granted Christians the freedom to worship and construct churches.

Besides being considered the mother of all churches throughout the world, St. John Lateran is also significant since it serves as the Pope's cathedral. Every bishop has a cathedral from which he shepherds his diocese. Cardinal Tobin has Sacred Heart Cathedral in Newark. Cardinal Dolan has St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. Pope Leo, as bishop of the Diocese of Rome, has the Lateran Basilica.

We also celebrate this feast because it highlights our human need for sacred places. This need is illustrated by the story of a little girl, who on being tucked into bed, asked her mother, "Mommy, where is God?" When her mother answered, "God is everywhere," her daughter thought for moment, then said, "But I want God to be somewhere."

Like that little child, we all have a need for places where we feel close to God. For the Jewish people, that place was the Temple in Jerusalem. It was from there, as we hear in Sunday's First Reading (Ezekiel 47:1-2, 8-9, 12), that God's saving grace flowed out like water to bring life to his people. And it was from there, as we hear in Sunday's Gospel (John 2:13-22), that Jesus drove out the merchants who had turned this sacred place into a marketplace.

For us, our sacred place is our local parish church. There we gather with our fellow Catholics to listen as God speaks to us as his word is proclaimed. There we are drawn into a "holy communion" with the Lord as we share his very Body and Blood. There we witness God's love in action as couples are joined in marriage, as babies are baptized, as teenagers are confirmed, as sins are forgiven, and as the pain of death is lessened by the promise of everlasting life.

Besides giving us a place to encounter God, churches also serve as silent witnesses to the presence of God in our world. Every church building proclaims that God is alive and that there is more to life than what we can see and touch.

This Sunday, we celebrate the dedication of the Lateran Basilica, a church that is centuries old and thousands of miles away. As we do so, we also recognize the importance of our sacred place. We rejoice that the God who is everywhere has chosen to be somewhere. God has chosen to be with us in our parish church!

