

GOSPEL MEDITATION - ENCOURAGE DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF SCRIPTURE

November 9, 2025 The Dedication of the Lateran Basilica John 2:13-22

When I was 22, I entered St. Peter's Basilica for the first time. It floored me. I could hardly take it in, its grandeur, majestic arches, vibrant colors, and the light that danced through its high windows. Somehow, amidst such splendor, I felt an overwhelming sense of belonging, as if I had finally come home.

Jesus reorients how we Catholics see sacred buildings. In today's Gospel he says, **"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:13-22)**. His riddle implies, shockingly, that his own body is now the fundamental dwelling place of God and humanity. The temple in Jerusalem has been superseded.

In our churches today — whether they mirror the basilica's grandeur or embrace humble simplicity — we experience architectural symbols of Christ's risen body. It is no accident we call them "churches": they make visible in brick-and-mortar Christ's body which is made up of the living stones we call Christians. Each church building, like St. John Lateran in Rome, or St. Peter's, or any other, is meant to be a vibrant sign of Christ's resurrected body. We should cherish and protect our churches as places where heaven touches earth, where we, as a community, are raised to the fullness of life in Christ.

— *Father John Muir*

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Dedication of the Lateran Basilica

Did you know there are churches in Rome older than St. Peter's? St. John Lateran is one of four major basilicas in the Eternal City, and it is by far the oldest. The land was donated by an ancient Roman family to the Emperor Constantine, who in turn gave it to the Church. For hundreds of years, St. John Lateran was the "mother church." Popes lived on the grounds through the 14th century. The church itself suffered from pillaging by invaders, fires, and earthquakes. It has been restored and rebuilt five times since the 300s. On this feast, we remember more than a building. We celebrate the resiliency of our faith. Though trials may come in our parishes, personal lives, and the world, the Church endures through the grace of Jesus Christ.