

# Homilies from last Sunday

## Homily for the Dedication of St John Lateran

**Readings Ezekiel 47: 1-2, 8-9; Corinthians 3: 9-11; John 2: 13-22**



**Fr Michael says:**

### **Our Community reaches out in prayer to the world**

According to a study, carried out in USA , the safest place for you to be at any given point in time is not in your car, or in the home or in the hospital but in church!

Today we celebrate the dedication of the basilica of St John Lateran in Rome. Why celebrate the dedication of a church in faraway Rome, you may ask. It is to remind us of the importance of the church building as sacred space set apart for personal and collective encounter with God.

Historically, the basilica of St John Lateran is the oldest Church of Rome and the highest ranking church in the world. As such it is the mother of all churches. When we celebrate its dedication to God, therefore, we celebrate the mystery of God's special presence and indwelling in buildings set apart for divine worship, including our own parish church.

We know that God is everywhere. Yet when the people of God erect a building and dedicate it totally to God's service, God's glory comes to dwell in that building in such a way that the building can now be called the house of God. So, while we celebrate God's special indwelling in a temple, we must remind ourselves that God's presence is not confined in the temple. God is still everywhere, but shows His glory in a special way in some persons, places, and things. A temple or church is one such place.

In earlier days, a temple, church or shrine was revered so much as to suggest that God dwelt exclusively in such places. People went to church, participated in service, received communion and went home without knowing who was sitting beside them in church. Our prayer was very private and the man or woman sitting next to you was rather seen as a distraction in one's intimate communion with God. Worshippers forgot that we are brothers and sisters, and that we come to church to worship God as family.

To help us realise this, the Vatican Council II introduced some changes in worship such as the priest facing the people at Mass and worshippers exchanging the sign of peace. However we must not lose the sense of the church as a sacred place, we need to hold on to those practices which remind us that God is present. How do we prepare ourselves for Mass? Do we sign ourselves with the Holy Water? Do we genuflect or bow to the altar or the tabernacle before taking our seat or before leaving the church?

We gather as a Community to help each other to pray and hold our world before the Lord. Let us create a sense of stillness and reverence as we prepare to share in our public worship of God, by joining fully in the prayers and responses, the hymns and the times of quiet. Today we are asked to realise more fully the beauty of who we are and our calling to worship God together, as individuals and as families, in all that we say and do in our daily lives – today's celebration helps us to realise our prayer and worship reach out to the whole world as we honour Bishop Francis's Cathedral!