



What's What

A weekly communication that provides an opportunity for our faith community to grow together in faith.

Basilica of St. John Lateran

On November 9, we celebrate today the Dedication of the Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome because it is the head and mother church of all Catholic churches in the world. On the façade of the basilica there is an inscription in Latin which reads, "the mother and mistress of all churches of Rome and the world." One might think St. Peter's Basilica is the head of all the churches but in fact it is the Basilica of St. John Lateran. Every bishop has a cathedral and the Pope's cathedral is the Basilica of St. John Lateran not the Basilica of St. Peter.

You may ask "Why is the Basilica of St. John Lateran the Pope's cathedral and not the Basilica of St. Peter since he lives next to St. Peter's Basilica?" History gives us the answer. In the

early centuries Christianity was outlawed in Rome and many Christians in Rome suffered martyrdom. The Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity and the famous Edict of Milan in 313 AD allowed Christians to practice their religion in public. Constantine had been given the palace in Rome that belonged to the Laterani and after his conversion to Christianity he gave it to the Pope. The Lateran Palace was then adapted to become a church and was dedicated on 9th November 324 and the Pope then lived in the Lateran Palace as it was called for the next 1000 years and the basilica was his cathedral. It was first called the Basilica of the Savior but later was also dedicated to St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist and so it ac-

quired the name Basilica of St. John Lateran. When the Papacy transferred to Avignon for about a century the condition of the Lateran

deteriorated so much that when the Papacy returned to Rome the Pope lived in two other locations before finally settling adjacent to St. Peter's Basilica where he now lives.

Perhaps we could say that the many times the Basilica suffered destruction of some kind is a symbol of the attacks on the Church and the hatred of some for the Church. The Basilica was attacked by the Vandals twice in 408 and 455. It was almost totally destroyed by an earthquake in 896 and it was destroyed by fire in 1308 and 1360. The Basilica is visited by huge numbers of pilgrims every year also symbolizing the love of so many people for the Church.

Those who visit the Basilica on pilgrimage visit it not just because it is the head of all churches and the Pope's cathedral. The wooden altar on which St. Peter celebrated Mass while in Rome is inside the main altar. The heads of Sts Peter and Paul were once believed to be inside busts above the main altar. Part of the table on which the Last Supper was celebrated is said to be behind

Issue 50
Basilica of St John Lateran
November 9, 2008

a bronze depiction of the Last Supper. At one time the Holy Stairs which is nearby was also in the Lateran, the stairs in Pilate's house on which Jesus is said to have walked during his trial. It is a marble stairs and is now covered with wood to protect it. Pilgrims ascend the stairs on their knees contemplating Jesus' Passion and on the way up drops of blood may be seen on the marble stairs beneath protective glass. The stairs was brought to Rome by Constantine's mother St. Helena.

As we celebrate the dedication of the "the mother and mistress of all churches of Rome and the world" let us pray also for those who have got lost going through life that they find the Church as a true mother to them and that Jesus may become the foundation stone and corner stone of their lives.

*From a homily by
Fr Tommy Lane
www.ftommylane.com*





Saint of the Day: St. Frances Xavier Cabrini (1850-1917)

On Thursday, November 13, the Church will remember St Frances Xavier Cabrini.

Frances Xavier Cabrini was the first United States citizen to be canonized. Her deep trust in the loving care of her God gave her the strength to be a valiant woman doing the work of Christ.

Refused admission to the religious order which had educated her to be a teacher, she began charitable work at the House of Providence Orphanage in Cadogno, Italy. In September 1877, she made her vows there and took the religious habit.

When the bishop closed the orphanage in 1880, he named Frances prioress of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart. Seven young women from the orphanage joined with her.

Since her early childhood in Italy, Frances had wanted to be a missionary in China but, at the urging of Pope Leo XIII, Frances went west instead of east. She traveled with six sisters to New York City to work with the thousands of Italian immigrants living there.

She found disappointment and difficulties with every step. When she arrived in New York City, the house intended to be her first orphanage in the United States was not available. The archbishop advised her to return to Italy. But Frances, truly a valiant woman, departed from the archbishop's residence all the more determined to establish that orphan-

age. And she succeeded.

In 35 years Frances Xavier Cabrini founded 67 institutions dedicated to caring for the poor, the abandoned, the uneducated and the sick. Seeing great need among Italian immigrants who were losing their faith, she organized schools and adult education classes.

As a child, she was always frightened of water, unable to overcome her fear of drowning. Yet, despite this fear, she traveled across the Atlantic Ocean more than 30 times. She died of malaria in her own Columbus Hospital in Chicago.

Comment:

The compassion and dedication of Mother Cabrini is still seen in hundreds of thousands of her fellow citizens, not

yet canonized, who care for the sick in hospitals, nursing homes and state institutions. We complain of increased medical costs in an affluent society, but the daily news shows us millions who have little or no medical care, and who are calling for new Mother Cabrinis to become citizen-servants of their land.

Quote:

At her canonization on July 7, 1946, Pius XII said, "Although her constitution was very frail, her spirit was endowed with such singular strength that, knowing the will of God in her regard, she permitted nothing to impede her from accomplishing what seemed beyond the strength of a woman."

www.americancatholic.org/Features/SaintOfDay

Things to do with the Dedication of St John Lateran Basilica?

- Learn more about St John Lateran at www.ewtn.com/library/CHRIST/LATERAN.HTM
- This basilica represents the place of baptism, so it would be a good time to think about and renew your baptismal promises (<http://www.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/Lent/baptismalpromises.html>)
- It also represents heaven, so we can meditate on the joys of heaven and God's generosity in giving us sufficient graces to be saved
- Since St. John Lateran is the Pope's church, say a prayer for our Holy Father.

From the Catholic Culture Library: [Mother Church of the World](#). *These are just suggestions. In providing these we assume no responsibility for, nor do we necessarily endorse these books or websites, their content, or their sponsoring organizations.*

"What's What" is a publication of the Youth Ministry Department of St Mary, Canandaigua, and St Bridget, Bloomfield.

Our Youth Ministry Mission Statement:

Building on the mission of our parishes to follow the way of Christ in our thoughts, words, and deeds, and to make Christ more fully present in all who live within our community, the Youth Ministry mission is to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the world today; to affirm the gifts of our youth and provide opportunities for young people to share their gifts with the larger community; and to meet the religious, spiritual and social needs of all youth with the committed leadership, guidance and support of our parish family, providing an opportunity for our entire faith community to grow together in Christian faith.