

# A building is a symbol of faith

**G**LEAMING SWORDS clashed in the bright Roman sun. Shields clattered under mighty blows. The army of Constantine fought bravely for the possession of Rome against the army of Maxentius in a climactic battle on the Milvian bridge north of Rome in the year 312. As the fury intensified the two leaders met one another in mortal combat in the middle of that bridge suspended over the flowing waters of the Tiber River. Constantine, strengthened by a night of prayer and convinced in the justice of his cause, struck the fatal blow which lifted Maxentius over the bridge and sent him plummeting to his death. His army scattered, and Constantine, victor in battle, ruled unchallenged as leader of Rome.

Constantine made good on a pledge. During that night of prayer he promised God that the Church would flourish if his army won the day. Constantine saw in a vision the letters IHS. In Greek, those letters are the first three of the name Jesus. But in Latin, they abbreviated the words "in hoc signo," or "in this sign." The sign was the chi-rho, two Greek letters, X and P, superimposed — the first two Greek letters of "Christ." Constantine placed this cross on the shields of his army, trusting the words he received in the vision, "In this sign, you will conquer." Constantine won the battle behind the cross of Christ. He had promised freedom for the Church. Now he would deliver.

**T**HE CHURCH had suffered much persecution. Christians lived partly in fear of death, and partly in defiance of it. Their numbers grew, but they lived in fear. The blood of martyrs had become the seedbed for the Church.

With the victory of Constantine, that time of persecution could come to an end. The Edict of Milan (313) proclaimed a much-needed freedom of religion. The faithful followers of Christ could now worship publicly and proudly. Rome's leader no longer desired their extermination, but their prosperity.

The new status of Christians was symbolized in the construction of the first Christian basilica.

Constantine authorized the building of a grand new house of worship on some prime property donated by the Lateran family. The church was originally dedicated to the Savior, but now is named for John the Baptist and John the Evangelist.

Pope Sylvester I dedicated the original church on the Lateran hill on Nov. 9, 324. The mother church of Rome, the cathedral of that capitol city, it thus became the cathedral church of the world. Constantine was baptized there. The baptistery still stands today next to the church which underwent renovations over the centuries. Popes lived in its palace. Only in recent centuries did they move to the Vatican, where the new St. Peter's Basilica had become the jewel of the city.

St. John Lateran is still the cathedral church of Rome. When we think of the Pope as the Bishop of Rome, this is his church, not St. Peter's.

Fr. Paul Turner



the  
**Good News**  
God's word in  
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**T**HE ANNIVERSARY of the dedication of St. John Lateran is the anniversary of the dedication of a people. It marks the independence won by Christians and the centrality of faith in a civilized world. Each year we celebrate that dedication because it is our dedication. That building represents the commitment and unity of the people of God.

When the dedication of St. John Lateran falls on a Sunday, it replaces the regular liturgy. The readings may be taken from those for the dedication of a church. Your parish may choose different ones from the examples printed on this page.

The vision of Ezekiel (47:1-2, 8-9, 12) revealed water flowing from the temple of God. When applied to this feast, that vision foreshadows the Lateran, from which has flowed the streams of faith from one generation to the next.

Paul compares the Corinthian community to a building (1 Corinthians 3:9-11, 16-17). The physical structure of a church building symbolizes the people who are the Church.

When Jesus drove out the buyers and sellers from the temple (John 2:13-22), he stressed the sacredness of the house of God.

This feast is more than the anniversary of a building. It is the celebration of a faith which endured rock solid throughout times of intense distress. It celebrates our community, which loves one another as we profess our faith in the God who has preserved us from age to age. □

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## Daily Scripture Readings

### All Souls Day, Sunday, November 2

Isaiah 25:6-9  
Psalms 23:1-6  
1 Corinthians 15:12-26  
Mark 8:27-35

### Monday, November 3

Romans 11:29-36  
Psalms 69:30-31, 33-34  
Luke 14:12-14

### Tuesday, November 4

Romans 12:5-16a  
Psalms 131:1-3  
Luke 14:15-24

### Wednesday, November 5

Romans 13:8-10  
Psalms 112:1-2, 4-5, 9  
Luke 14:25-33

### Thursday, November 6

Romans 14:7-12  
Psalms 27:1, 4, 13-14  
Luke 15:1-10

### Friday, November 7

Romans 15:14-21  
Psalms 98:1-4  
Luke 16:1-8

### Saturday, November 8

Romans 16:3-9, 16, 22-27  
Psalms 145:2-5, 10-11  
Luke 16:9-15

### Dedication of St. John

### Lateran, Sunday,

### November 9

Ezekiel 47:1-2, 8-9, 12  
Psalms 84:3-6, 8, 11  
1 Corinthians 3:9c-11,  
16-17  
John 2:13-22

