

The Dedication of the Lateran Basilica

St Michael's Bungaree, November 9th 2025

Our Feast of the dedication of the Lateran Basilica seems an unusual feast, but further reflection reveals much more than a building, beautiful as it is. The symbol of St John Lateran Basilica in Rome is as the Cathedral Church of Rome, it's the Pope's Cathedral and as the Bishop of Rome we, as part of the Universal Church are always called into communion with our fellow pilgrims, the People of God. In that sense, this feast is a celebration of our own identity, an identity that's heightened over the November days when our sense of communion is broadened to include the communion of saints, the great cloud of witnesses who continue to inspire and encourage us, challenge us and pray for us and all of the faithful departed who we pray for throughout this month.

Tee-shirts, like much of our clothing, often carry brand names, emblems, and corporate logos. Often it's hard to find something that doesn't turn you into a walking billboard or an advertisement for a large multinational corporation or a uniformed member of an army of people wearing exactly the same item of unique clothing. Your personal identity it seems can be shaped for you, or more specifically, it can be lost without you ever knowing that you gave it away. A deceased priest friend of mine, used to delight in seeing the reaction he got when he wore his favourite tee shirt that read in bold letters:

"I'm a Priest. In case of an accident, please call a Catholic."

Another friend wears a tee shirt that has a person's face with one of those disguises you used to get at the show, with the big plastic glasses, nose and moustache and then underneath it says *"I'm a blessing in disguise."*

Our shared identity is as the Pilgrim People of God, the Church. The church is not firstly a building of bricks and mortar, they're the buildings we create in

which the Church can assemble. Together, we recognise Christ as our foundation. St Paul writes, 'you are God's building, a building of flesh and blood, a community of faith and service. When a building is dedicated it stays dedicated just by being there. Through baptism we too have been dedicated, consecrated with the Oil of Chrism to be priest, prophet and king!

This feast is a feast of our identity, a celebration our being formed and shaped, nourished and fed into Christ's body, the Church, the Pilgrim People of God.

In his autobiography, titled Blessings in disguise, Alec Guinness, the English actor speaks with love about the Church he joined many years ago:

"She has books to read aloud, pictures to show, consolation to offer, strength to give and some marvelous people from all ages, to hold up for the world's admiration; not many in high places, perhaps, but thousands in the market square, hospital ward, homes, schools, back pews, desert and jungle."

This is the church, of which we are numbered among. It is who we are and who the Church is.

Thomas Campbell wrote that "To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die." In celebrating the feast of All Souls and of keeping the month of November to pray for the faithful departed, we too are keeping a pledge not to forget. Not to forget those who have gone before us, those who await completion, those who can still be touched by the voice of prayer. We remember those from our past – those we've loved in life and who we still miss. Our remembering also makes present to us our own mortality, and our deaths, a reality from which we need not hide or deny. And our remembering is also an act of hope for the future, in the God who is Lord not only of the living but of the dead, a hope that is not deceptive and which in faith is extended to all who have died and who await the day of their fulfilment when they see God

face to face. It is this mystery, the mystery of death and resurrection that is at the heart of our Christian faith. At the heart of the Eucharist is the paschal mystery of Christ's dying and rising and the action of the Eucharist is a whole act of remembrance.

We have a wonderful tradition in Catholicism of praying for the souls of all the dead. Notice that we pray for all the dead: *strengthen our hope that all our departed brothers and sisters will share in his resurrection*. We pray for them all.

Eternal rest grant to them O Lord and may perpetual light shine upon them. May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace. Amen.