

Dedication of the Lateran Basilica (Sunday) – 09.11.2025

1 Co 3:9-11. 16-17 / Jn 2:13-22

*Todos & Insieme*

The archbasilica of St John Lateran is the cathedral of the diocese of Rome and the episcopal see of Pope Leo as bishop of the city. Because of this, this church building is the *Mother and Head of All Churches in Rome and in the World*. To celebrate the anniversary of its dedication today is in some way to celebrate our catholicity. It is a reminder that our local Catholic communities, wherever they are in the world, whatever their size, are not isolated entities vaguely connected to one another but are parts of a communion of Churches in communion with pope Leo as bishop of Rome. This communion is not a conglomerate of juridical companies, a grouping of canonical structures but a communion of communions. Here the word *communion* is not used inadvertently. What is at the heart of this communion is our communion as we receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist, which unites us to Christ and to one another

In order to explain to the people of Corinth what is at stake in all this, St Paul uses the image of the temple. According to him, on one hand our gathering together makes us the temple of God and on the other hand each one of us is God's temple. The apostle is not focused on bricks and mortar, on a particular building as if our attachment to a building is what guarantees our unity or holiness. For St Paul each one of us participates in the catholicity of the Church because each one of us has become a sacred space, and from this inner space "where our heart is" (Mt 6:21) and where God dwells, communion flows out and embraces the whole world. Pope Francis reminded us that "our heart is what shapes our spiritual identity and puts us in communion with other people. (...) Everything finds its unity in the heart." (*Dilexit nos*, n. 14. 21)

When they are, purified by conversion and united in love, our hearts participate in the consecration of the places wherein we worship, the places where we work and live and, in this way, they build up the temple of God that we are called to form here and now. A consecrated building, whether we think of the Lateran basilica or our monastic church here in Rostrevor, is a powerful pointer to God's encompassing presence yet it needs the commitment of our hearts in order for it to become a beacon of hope, and in some way, a sacrament of God's gracious love in the world.

A word which seems particularly important to Pope Leo's thought is the word *together*. Two weeks ago, in his homily for the Jubilee Day of the Synodal Teams, in the original Italian version, he used the word *insieme* 12 times. He was very clear about what the Church is supposed to be. Allow me to quote him: "The supreme rule in the Church is love. No one is called to dominate; all are called to serve. No one should impose his or her own ideas; we must all listen to one another. No one is excluded; we are all called to participate. No one possesses the whole truth; we must all humbly seek it and seek it together. The very word *together* expresses the call to communion in the Church. (...) Prior to any differences, we are called in the Church to walk together in the pursuit of God." (*Homily*, 26.10.2025)

The call to grow in togetherness is not to be confused with an invitation to settle cosily into a holy huddle, wherein togetherness rhymes with sameness. We are all aware that we will grow in communion in the Church only insofar as we allow the Spirit of conversion to accomplish its work in our hearts and minds. The road that we have to walk together

requires patient listening to what the Spirit is saying to the Church, respect for one another, and ongoing conversion.

Instead of using the image of the temple, we could turn to Isaiah who used another image when he said: “Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords.” (54:2) The vocabulary here is quite eloquent: *enlarge, be stretched out, do not hold back, lengthen*. This is about growing and going beyond our comfort zones, about letting go of some of our old habits and embracing what is new and life-giving. Isaiah’s words speak to our Church today and found an echo in Pope Francis’s speech in Lisbon: “In the Church, there is room for everyone. Everyone. In the Church, no one is left out or left over. There is room for everyone. Just the way we are. Everyone.” (*Address*, 03.08.2023)

We need to be courageous in dismantling all the walls that, in our hearts and in our streets, prevent us from meeting one another and journeying together. There are too many political decisions and religious attitudes which foster discrimination and excommunication; there are too many areas in the lives of our communities which are marked by competition and a sense that we can be great on our own, saved on our own, be happy on our own apart from others, particularly those who are different and on the margins, those who are in need and are excluded from our conversations and decision-making processes.

In some way it would be good if, like Jesus, we could be devoured by good zeal for God’s house, not a house made of stones but the one we are called to form together. At a time when our Churches and our civil society are threatened by polarisation and divisions, may we become heralds of communion, bridge builders, agents of togetherness. *Todos* and *Insieme*, *Everyone* and *Together*.