

## DEDICATION OF THE LATERAN BASILICA IN ROME (11/8-9/2008)

*Ezekiel 47/1-12, Psalm 46, 1 Corinthians 3/9-17, John 2/13-22*

Think of it as a magnificent tapestry!

There is our heavenly abode with God; there is the Holy Temple in Jerusalem where God resided with His chosen people; there is the great church of St. John Lateran in Rome which we commemorate today; there is your parish church; there is the People of God we call the Church; and there is you – the temple of the Holy Spirit.

It's a wonderful panorama of visions and also real places and peoples

Do we need places of worship?

There are plenty of people in this world who never darken the doors of a Church or temple or shrine. There are others who practice their "church-lieness" occasionally as on Christmas or Easter or after 9/11 or when the stock market crashes.

It seems that a "feeling" of spirituality suffices for them, if they care at all.

Some protest that they experience more "spirituality" outside institutional churches and buildings and congregations than they do within them.

And then there are most of the readers of this meditation – the men and women who take the notion of worship of God seriously.

I live at a seminary in which there are six separate places dedicated to worship.

Each has its own purpose.

Each lends an air of God's presence to the campus, from the stately Chapel of the Immaculate Conception to the tiny convent chapel of the Oblate Sisters of Jesus the Priest.

In each of these sacred places, the Eucharist takes place and the Blessed Sacrament is reserved in the tabernacle.

The sanctuary candles burn continuously.

Even as the students, faculty, and administration people are hurrying about engaged in their various duties, the awesome presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist prevails.

To people of faith, the importance of worship space is not taken for granted.

It is there we go for inspiration, for sustenance, for strength, for hope.

There we are assured of *Shekinah*, the presence of the Lord.

In the early 1970's, the church of Old St. James on south Wabash Avenue in Chicago was gutted by fire.

For over two years, we were without a worship space; the parish hall housed the Sunday Masses, and then was set up for Sunday afternoon bingo.

I can still remember the joy and the gratitude we, as a congregation, experienced when we finally got back into our church again.

When we celebrate this feast of St. John Lateran, I confess I think of this Roman basilica as a person; I know from experience what a church means.

It's a person for me, it's the Lord in our midst, around whom we all come together.

The final prayer of the Mass today says: "By sharing in this sacrament (the Church), may we become the temple of your presence." To that we say: Amen!