

St. John Lateran



The story of St. John Lateran begins in the year 312 A.D. when Constantine celebrated his victory over Maxentius and took control of Rome. Needing a place to command his new empire, Constantine chose the Lateran Palace for his headquarters. The property originally belonged to the Laterani family, who were put to death by the Emperor Nero.

To strengthen his bonds with the pope, Constantine had a basilica built on the Laterani grounds. It was dedicated by Pope Sylvester on November 9, 324. At that time it was named the Church of Christ the Savior. The Pope's residence and papal offices were built next to the basilica. In 904, the church was renamed in honor of two Johns, St. John the Baptist and St. John the Apostle. Since that time it has been known as St. John Lateran. This was the residence of the Pope until after the commissioning of the new St. Peter basilica in the 1500's. St. John Lateran is still the "Mother Church" of Rome and the world. The Pope presides here as Bishop.

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In 1209, St. Francis traveled here to request the approval of a new way of life from Pope Innocent III. Eventually his rule of 1223 was approved in these papal offices. It is here that Pope Innocent III had a dream of Francis holding up the Church of St. John Lateran, and Francis dreamed of his future brotherhood that would grow and be under his protection.

In 1926, Mussolini commissioned a statue of Francis to celebrate the 700th anniversary of Francis' death and to honor Francis as the Patron of Italy. From the rear the statue gives the impression of holding up the "Mother Church of Rome."

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St. John Lateran was the site of the Fourth Lateran Council which Francis attended.

We celebrated Eucharist in the Choir.

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The Pope's chair:

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The mosaic over the Pope's chair shows St. Francis on the left and St. Anthony of Padua on the right. The small figure of Pope Nicholas IV is clinging to Mary's robes.

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Francis presented himself as a God-inspired and utterly honest and self-confident person. The strength of his inner spirit (the result of time spent in the aves) moved Innocent to approve Francis' way of life.

Francis' message from the crucifix at San Damiano ("Go, rebuild my church") began to take on universal and global dimensions.

Francis' Rule was composed of Gospel texts. The event at St. John Lateran emphasized the prominence of the Word for Francis.

Francis promised obedience to the successors of Peter.

Reflection:

Why did the pope listen to Francis?

Why is it important to have this "form of life" confirmed by the church?

How do I regard the papacy? Could I promise obedience the way Francis did? If I could speak with the pope, what would I like to say?

St. John Lateran II

St. John Lateran is just outside the old city wall of Rome.



The Holy door that is opened every 25 years for the Holy Year. Otherwise it is cemented shut from the inside.

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These doors are taken from the Roman Senate. As you can see there are no religious symbols on either side. These doors are still used on occasion.

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The tomb of Innocent III



The ceiling of the Church is inlaid with gold from the “new world” (that’s us.)

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It is reported that the heads of St. Peter and St. Paul are here.

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