

Homily  
Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption  
January 27, 2023

The construction of our cathedral began in 1895, the dream of then-bishop, Camillus Paul Maes. Pope Pius XII elevated our cathedral to the rank of minor basilica on December 8, 1953, on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. A beautiful and fitting memorial of our Blessed Mother's beginning in this life and her beginning in eternal life. As you stand at the foot of the sanctuary, Bishop Maes' crypt is to your right, to your left one of the largest stained-glass windows in the world, depicting the Coronation of Mary, and the Council of Ephesus. On the far right is the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, where the tabernacle resides. Behind the baldacchino, the canopy behind the altar, is a recently dedicated and consecrated shrine to St. Paul with over 300 relics, including two skulls taken from among the 11,000 companion martyrs of St. Ursula. The majority of the building was completed in 1915, but construction has continued even to today. If you haven't yet, take the tour. There is so much history and architecture and many more meaningful images. You could spend days walking and wandering and still not capture all the statures, murals, designs and other features.

Every local church, or diocese, has a cathedral, and a bishop who sits there. We are blessed to have our cathedral designated a basilica. We are doubly blessed to have such a beautiful church to celebrate Masses, ordinations, weddings, Solemn Vespers, the Chrism Mass and all other liturgies. Today, we celebrate the anniversary of our cathedral's dedication in 1901.

In today's Gospel, we hear of Jesus condemning what was taking place in the temple. "Take these out of here, and stop making my Father's house a marketplace." Jesus loves the temple. He was presented in the temple where Simeon, moved by the Holy Spirit, remained in the temple until he saw the Messiah, as marked in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Joyful Mystery of the Holy Rosary. He demonstrated His wisdom even at the tender age of 12 as remembered in the 5<sup>th</sup> Joyful Mystery. Jesus taught at the temple every day, according to Luke, chapter 21.

The temple, and today, our churches and cathedrals, are solemn and sacred spaces. We gather and celebrate our faith and community. We worship our Lord and God. I believe the most important activity we can participate in; we receive God, in Word and in Sacrament. We listen to Jesus, just as His disciples did 2000 years ago in the temple, along the shoreline and on the hillside. We hear His wisdom and His teaching to bring us all closet to His Father. And we receive Jesus, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity, in the appearances of bread and wine, the food of the angels. We become what we eat and we become one with each other.

When Jesus said, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up," we know what He means. He died for us and He rose again, destroying death for us. He loves us more than we can know or understand. And we, as imperfect as we are, love Him, in our churches, our Cathedral and in each other.

Today, as we remember the dedication of our beautiful and blessed Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, we remember that the building is a reflection of our faith and a channel for our love, the love Jesus Himself commended us to embrace; love for God and love for each other.