



Dedication of the Basilica of St. John Lateran
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Today, when we think of where the Pope lives in Rome, we think of St. Peter's Basilica, in the Vatican.

But the popes in Rome did not always live inside the Vatican.

The first church in which the popes lived was the Basilica of St. John Lateran. In fact, the Lateran Basilica is still the pope's cathedral, which means that, even to this day, it is still the official church of the pope.

The history of the Basilica of St. John Lateran goes all the way back to the early 300s, when Constantine became emperor of Rome. Constantine ended the persecution of Christians and gave the pope the palace of the Lateran family. And so this palace became known as the Lateran Basilica and was dedicated to Jesus the Savior. Later on, it was also dedicated to both St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist. This makes the Basilica of St. John Lateran the oldest basilica in Rome, the first home of the popes, and the most important church in Rome.

The Lateran Basilica was so splendid that it was known as "the golden basilica." Today, beautiful ancient mosaics color the basilica's walls. Great columns, flanked by twelve giant statues of the Apostles, lead to the basilica's greatest treasure: the high altar.

This altar is precious because, according to legend, the wooden altar used by St. Peter is encased inside. This means that the marble altar the pope uses today contains the altar used by the first pope!

When we celebrate the dedication of the Basilica of St. John Lateran, we celebrate the unity of all Catholics under the pope, who is the representative of Jesus on earth.

Dear Lord, please bless the pope, your representative on earth!