

Anniversary of the Dedication of the Church *Sanctificetur et consecretur hoc templum*
October 13-14, 2018

Readings: 1Kings 8: 22-23, 27-30; Ezekiel 43:1-2, 3-7; Ephesians 2:19-22 Matthew 16:13-19

Sixty years is a long time, especially when we stop to consider how much has changed in that span. When Archbishop Brady held the solemn consecration ceremony sixty years ago, it was just one day after the funeral of Pope Pius XII. The Catholic world was without an earthly leader, yet thousands of miles away in Saint Paul, life went on, as we prepared for a five-hour pontifical ceremony!

The Rite called for the bishop to proceed three times around the outside of the church– first sprinkling the upper part of the walls, then the lower, and finally that area level with his face. Just imagine that! It was an age of growth in the Church and society. The Baby Boom generation was in full swing, with a birth rate more than double that of today's. We were at peace in the world. NASA was racing towards the moon and citizens were flying non-stop across the ocean in brand new Boeing 707 jets. The future looked bright.

The Rite of Consecration took place only following the fulfillment of strict canonical requirements: the church must be durably constructed, substantially complete and there must be absolute certainty that the building will never fall out of the hands of the Church. That was a nice way of saying that it should be debt free! It was the rule about substantial completion that kept this ceremony from happening sooner. Great cathedrals often take decades or longer to be completed on the inside.

The essence of the consecration of a church consisted in the anointing with Sacred Chrism of the (12) twelve crosses on the inner walls, along with the words *Sanctificetur et consecretur hoc templum...*– “May this Church be sanctified and consecrated, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Under each cross, a bracket holding a candle is affixed. This church has been set aside for public worship, dedicated solemnly and solely to God for His glorification, and not our own. Artisans who crafted

the stained glass, the woodcarvers, the stone masons, engineers and architects—all labored to fashion this building for God’s glory. How we care for it more than a century later becomes our gift to God.

We enter for worship, both in times of plenty and in times of need. Standing before the altar of the Lord, Solomon exclaimed “LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below...” God keeps his covenant with his servants, and He will not abandon us today.

It is our sacred trust to keep this Cathedral vibrant and strong. We are called to be beacons of hope, not in the halcyon days of the past, but here in this sacred space. This is our sacred trust, a symbol of God’s abiding presence. Ours is a living faith, active outside these walls, whenever we bring our faith into the public square, reaching out to those in need in our midst, lifting up the arms of the weary.

Today’s anniversary is an invitation to enter into a place that inspires reverence, awe and wonder and yes, even a holy fear of the Lord. It recalls the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, imparted to hundreds who come here each and every year for Confirmation. But the sacred liturgy for this anniversary invites us to make a pilgrimage of the heart much more than it asks us to recall a date from history.

Today the Church professes the abiding and objective presence of God in that new and indestructible Temple which is the Body of Christ. We pass from outside into another realm, encompassing and enveloping our lives. “Can it indeed be that God dwells among men on earth?” Is it even possible that He desires to dwell here in our midst?

Indeed, He is here in our midst, and the reverence with which we treat this Sacred space, by our demeanor, our manner of dress and even our muted voices, is but a dim reflection of the honor we give to Almighty God. The consecratory candles envelope us in the light of Christ, indicating the very spots where the bishop applied the

Sacred Chrism to the walls.

Those who pass through these doors are all on an equal plane before God, humbled, overwhelmed by His love and grace. The beggar, the rich, the sainted as well as the sinner finds a home here. We enter into this space, truly a gateway to heaven, a starting point directing us onward into realms we cannot fully appreciate now.

These doors protect us, they are a place of refuge from the storms of the world, but they cannot contain us. Each day, we must leave them, and go into the world.

These walls have been anointed with the sacred Chrism, a visible reminder that God has chosen to dwell here with us. May our lives reflect the radiant beauty of God's love, strengthened from within these walls, to go out to transform the world.