



The building of a church

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Earlier this week on Thursday [August 5], Mother Church celebrated the feast of the dedication of the basilica of St. Mary Major, one of Rome's four major basilicas, built in the fifth century and still standing today. Originally called the feast of Our Lady of Snows, legend has it that the church was built on a site where the Virgin Mary left her footprints during an August snowfall.

A great deal of work goes into the physical construction of a church. I marvel at the beautiful, grand church structures built long before equipment made construction easy. The permanence and glorious beauty of many churches tell us something of their importance in our lives, and more the importance of what happens within their walls.

The Church calendar includes celebrations of dedications of churches to remind us of the foundation, permanence, and life of the individual church and universal Church. But the foundation, permanence, and life of the Church should also be reflected in the lives of we who believe. Vatican II clearly explained that believers make up the Church; no people, no church.

Remember what Jesus says in the Gospel this Sunday [August 8] about the servants in their master's house: "Blessed are those servants whom the master finds vigilant on his arrival." We are the servants whom God has left within his house—the house of the Church! Do we protect and fight for the Church when the Devil tries to get in? Do we give our treasure, time, and talent to our Master's house? Are we really active in parish life, or just here for Mass every now and again?

We have been entrusted with the Church here in Terre Haute at St. Patrick and St. Margaret Mary. Are we good stewards of this church? Jesus tells us: "Much will be required of the person entrusted with much." There is no doubt we have been entrusted with much. Do we give our time to this church? Our talent? Our treasure (not just money)?

We are called to fashion, with the help of the Holy Spirit, the life of our local Church in the same way that craftsmen and builders physically pieced together and fashioned the basilica of St. Mary Major, St. Patrick, and St. Margaret Mary.

May we be good stewards of our Master's house!



Pope Benedict XVI on the Transfiguration

No One Lives 'on Tabor' While on Earth

Today [August 6], Mother Church celebrates with devotion the feast of the transfiguration of Jesus. We recall and meditate on this particular part of Christ's life every time we pray the fourth luminous mystery of the rosary. Below are words from our Holy Father, given on March 13, 2006 at St. Peter's Square, that reflect on this sacred moment of Christ's life.

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

Yesterday morning the week of spiritual exercises ended, which were preached here, in the Apostolic Palace, by the retired patriarch of Venice, Cardinal Marco Cé. They were days dedicated entirely to listening to the Lord, who always speaks to us, but who expects more attention from us, especially in the Lenten season.

Today's Gospel passage also reminds us of this, when proposing the account of the transfiguration of Christ on Mount Tabor. Astonished in the presence of the transfigured Lord, who was speaking with Moses and Elias, Peter, James and John were suddenly enveloped in a cloud from which a voice arose that proclaimed: "This is my beloved Son, listen to him" (Mark 9:7).

When one has the grace to sense a strong experience of God, it is as though seeing something similar to what the disciples experienced during the Transfiguration: For a moment they experienced ahead of time something that will constitute the happiness of paradise. In gen-

eral, it is brief experiences that God grants on occasions, especially in anticipation of harsh trials. However, no one lives "on Tabor" while on earth.

Human existence is a journey of faith and, as such, goes forward more in darkness than in full light, with moments of obscurity and even profound darkness. While we are here, our relationship with God develops more with listening than with seeing; and even contemplation takes place, so to speak, with closed eyes, thanks to the interior light lit in us by the word of God.

The Virgin Mary herself, notwithstanding the fact that she was the human creature closest to God, walked day after day as though on a pilgrimage of faith (cf. "Lumen Gentium," 58), keeping and meditating constantly in her heart the word that God addressed to her, whether through the sacred Scriptures or through events of the life of her son, in which she recognized and accepted the Lord's mysterious voice.

This is, therefore, the gift and commitment for each one of us in the Lenten Season: To listen to Christ, like Mary. To listen to him in the word, preserved in sacred Scripture. To listen to him in the very events of our lives, trying to read in them the messages of providence. To listen to him, finally, in our brothers, especially in the little ones and the poor, for whom Jesus himself asked our concrete love. To listen to Christ and to obey his voice. This is the only way that leads to joy and love.