

Holy Mass on the 125th Anniversary of the Dedication of the Church of Sant'Anselmo all'Aventino

Homily of the Holy Father Leo XIV

Church of Sant'Anselmo all'Aventino, Rome
Feast of Saint Martin – Tuesday, 11 November 2025

"You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church" (Mt 16:18). Dear brothers and sisters, we have heard these words of Jesus as we commemorate the 125th anniversary of the Dedication of this church, strongly desired by Pope Leo XIII, who promoted its construction.

It was his intention that this edifice, together with that of the adjoining International College, should contribute to a strengthening of the Benedictine presence in the Church and in the world, through ever-greater unity within the Benedictine Confederation—a goal for which the Office of the Abbot Primate was also introduced. He did this because he was convinced that your ancient Order could be of great assistance to the good of the entire People of God in a moment rich with challenges, such as the transition from the 19th to the 20th century proved to be.

Indeed, from its origins, monasticism has been a "frontier" reality, driving courageous men and women to establish centres of prayer, work, and charity in the most remote and inaccessible places, often transforming desolate areas into fertile and rich lands—from an agricultural and economic perspective, but above all, a spiritual one. Thus, the monastery has increasingly been characterised as a place of growth, peace, hospitality, and unity, even in the darkest periods of history.

Even in our own time, there is no lack of challenges to face. The sudden changes we are witnessing provoke and question us, giving rise to problems hitherto unprecedented. This celebration reminds us that, like the Apostle Peter, and together with him Benedict and so many others, we too can respond to the demands of the vocation we have received only by placing Christ at the centre of our existence and mission. We must start from that act of faith which leads us to recognise Him as the Saviour, translating this faith into prayer, study, and the commitment to a holy life.

In this place, all this is accomplished in various ways: in the liturgy, first of all, then in *Lectio divina*, in research, and in pastoral care, with the involvement of monks who have come from every part of the world, and with an openness to clergy, religious men and women, and laypeople of the most diverse backgrounds and conditions. The Monastery, the Athenaeum, the Liturgical Institute, and the pastoral activities linked to the church must, in conformity with the teachings of Saint Benedict, grow ever more in synergy as an authentic "school of the

Lord's service" (St Benedict, *Rule*, Prologue, 45).

For this reason, I have thought of the complex in which we find ourselves as a reality that must aspire to become a beating heart within the great body of the Benedictine world with the church at the centre, according to the teachings of Saint Benedict.

The First Reading (cf. Ez 43:1-2, 4-7a) presented us with the image of the river flowing from the Temple. This harmonises very well with the image of the heart pumping the vital fluid of blood into the body, so that every member may receive nourishment and strength for the benefit of the others (cf. 1 Cor 12:20-27); as well as with the image of the spiritual edifice of which the Second Reading spoke, founded on the solid rock that is Christ (cf. 1 Pt 2:4-9).

In the industrious hive of Sant'Anselmo, let this be the place from which everything starts and to which everything returns to find verification, confirmation, and deepening before God, as Saint John Paul II recommended during his visit to the Pontifical Athenaeum on the occasion of the Centenary of its foundation. Referring to your Patron Saint, he said: "Saint Anselm reminds everyone [...] that the knowledge of divine mysteries is not so much a conquest of human genius, but rather a gift that God gives to the humble and to believers" (*Address*, 1 June 1986).

He was referring, as mentioned, to the teachings of the Doctor of Aosta, but we wish to hope that such is also the prophetic message that reaches the Church and the world from this Institution, as the fulfilment of the mission we have all received: to be a people God has acquired for himself to proclaim his marvellous deeds, he who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light (cf. 1 Pt 2:9).

The Dedication is the solemn moment in the history of a sacred building in which it is consecrated to be a place of meeting between space and time, between the finite and the infinite, between man and God: an open door towards the eternal, in which the soul finds an answer to the "tension between the conjuncture of the moment and the light of time, of the greater horizon [...] which opens us to the future as a final cause that attracts" (Francis, Ap. Exhort. *Evangelii gaudium*, 222) in the encounter between fullness and limitation that accompanies our earthly journey.

The Second Vatican Council describes all this in one of its most beautiful pages, defining the Church as "human and divine, visible but endowed with invisible realities, fervent in action and devoted to contemplation, present in the world and yet a pilgrim; [...] in such a way, however, that in her the human is directed and subordinated to the divine, the visible to the invisible, action to contemplation, and this present world to that city yet to come, which we seek" (Const. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 2).

It is the experience of our life and the life of every man and woman in this world, in search of that ultimate and fundamental answer that "flesh and blood" cannot reveal, but only the Father in heaven (cf. Mt 16:17); ultimately in need of Jesus, "the Christ, the Son of the living

God" (v. 16). We are called to seek Him and we are called to bring to Him all those we meet, grateful for the gifts he has bestowed upon us, and above all for the love with which he has preceded us (cf. Rom 5:6). This temple will then increasingly become a place of joy, where one experiences the beauty of sharing with others what one has received freely (cf. Mt 10:8).