

HOMILY FOR POLICE MEMORIAL SERVICE
ST ANDREW'S CATHEDRAL, SATURDAY MAY 14 2011

My dear brothers and sisters,

"The greatest among you must behave as if he were the youngest; the leader as if he were the one who serves. For who is the greater: the one at table or the one who serves? The one at table, surely? Yet here am I among you as one who serves!"

These words taken from today's Gospel remind us of the vocation that we each have in our own area of life, namely that of service. Service of God and service of one another and the wider community.

As we gather together this morning, I should like to express, in the name of the whole Catholic community of this city, my sincere gratitude to the officers and staff of Strathclyde Police for their daily care and attentiveness to our safety and security. Thank you for your service which is a vocation blessed by God.

Today's service is an annual opportunity for us to recall those who have died, whose service of the community and whose friendship affected the lives of many. We wish to recall them this morning with affection and gratitude.

The words of St Paul which we heard in our second reading offer us a glimpse of that Christian hope which transforms death for us: "I think that what we suffer in this life can never be compared to the glory, as yet unrevealed, which is waiting for us ... We know that by turning everything to their good God co-operates with all those who love him, with all those that he has called according to his purpose. They are the ones he chose specially long ago and intended to become true images of his Son."

The friendships we recall today were forged – as so many true friendships are – on the anvil of common service. A service based on

high ideals, fortified by a sense of vocation and cemented in adversity.

There will be many in this congregation who will have their own memories of colleagues now departed; today we wish to express our appreciation of their service and your continuing efforts to maintain peaceful, safe and harmonious communities.

People like to recall the days of the friendly village bobby on the beat and there is a nostalgia for a return to such an era – how realistic that may be I do not know. Those calls though, tell of a very real affection for the service provided by the police, a respect and appreciation for your role and your presence.

Often it is only when we are shaken by adversity and tragedy that those sentiments resurface. But re-surface they do and people find the vocabulary of appreciation which, if truth be told, is felt every day of the week, when in quiet, unpublicised encounters, members of the emergency services bring comfort, reassurance and peace to those facing difficulties in their own lives.

Those words of the Prophet Isaiah, which we heard in the first reading seem to describe that hidden but appreciated work of the emergency services ...

In the wilderness justice will come to live
and integrity in the fertile land;
integrity will bring peace,
justice give lasting security.

My people will live in a peaceful home,
in safe houses,
in quiet dwellings.

These words are also a prompt to us; when the going gets tough and when it may seem that our work is unappreciated, we must recall

that nothing we do for the good of others falls outside the gaze of the God who made us, who loves us, and who waits for us with a Father's tender embrace when our day's toil is over and we are called home.

Amen