

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent – St Jude’s and St John Ogilvie’s

In five years time we will be celebrating the fourth centenary of the martyrdom of St John Ogilvie, now, along with St Jude, patron of this parish.

I am delighted at the way your Parish Priest and you as parishioners are keeping alive and promoting devotion to this Scottish Martyr of the Reformation period. This year fellow Christians will be celebrating the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Scottish Reformation Parliament which established what the Holy Father described as the “great rupture with Scotland’s Catholic past”.

After a thousand years of Catholicism in Scotland during which the nation was formed, a parliament of nobles and representatives of the higher class, largely in the absence of the higher clergy who made up the second of the “Three Estates”, met in Edinburgh and banned the practice of the Mass, recourse to the Holy See and imposed a new profession of faith remodelled to incorporate the teachings of the protestant reformers.

The Archbishop of Glasgow, James Beaton, remembering the brutal murder of Cardinal Beaton took himself off to Paris where he remained until his death in 1603 – one of his colleagues Archbishop Hamilton of St Andrews was hanged at Stirling in his Mass vestments in 1571 as were several other priests in Glasgow; others were publicly vilified and abused – churches were sacked, cathedrals and monasteries abandoned – their picturesque ruins are among the sites of Scotland.

“The Church in your country” remarked the Holy Father to the Bishops of Scotland last month, “like many in Northern Europe, has suffered the tragedy of division” and he added “I give thanks to God for the progress that has been made in healing the wounds that were a legacy of that period, especially the sectarianism that has continued to rear its head even in recent times.”

The Holy Father mentioned in particular our participation in Action of Churches Together in Scotland. He said: “See that the work of rebuilding unity among the followers of Christ is carried forward with constancy and commitment” and added, “while resisting any pressure to dilute the Christian message, set your sights on the goal of full, visible unity, for nothing less can respond to the will of Christ.”

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council considered prayer as a priority in this regard, calling it the “soul of the ecumenical movement.”

I believe St John Ogilvie would be among the first to make intercession for this course, for which in a real sense he laid down his life.

Though at Glasgow Cross in 1615 he was hanged – they said – for denying the King's claim to headship of the Church, he was arrested for saying Mass.

"You were an over-insolent fellow to say your Masses in a reformed city" Archbishop Spottiswood, the protestant occupant of St Mungo's See said to him, striking him as he said so.

"You do not act like a Bishop, but like an executioner" Ogilvie retorted.

I am reminded of Jesus' words when he was struck in the presence of the High Priest: "If I have spoken wrongly, bear witness to the wrong; but if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?"

It is difficult for us today to understand why St John Ogilvie and so many others, laity as well as priests, had to suffer from saying Mass or attending it. Was it the devil's hatred showing through misguided reformers? Or was it their devilishly clever conclusion that if the Mass were banned the Church would collapse – which is what happened.

St John within a year or two of his ordination as a priest requested that he be sent to the Scottish Mission that he might celebrate Mass for his own countrymen who had been deprived of it. When God sent Moses to the people of Israel he said "I have seen the miserable state of my people. I have heard their appeal." God's love for his people echoed in the heart of St John.

Our Holy Father noted that it was 400 years since St John's ordination to the priesthood "a happy coincidence" (when) the whole Church is currently celebrating the Year for Priests.

"The witness of priests who are genuinely committed to prayer and are joyful in their ministry bears fruit not only in the spiritual lives of the faithful, but also in new vocations" so said Pope Benedict to us. You can rejoice that that is the example you have here, so pray for vocations to the priesthood, and in your turn demonstrate the compassion of Christ for his scattered flock.

And above all love the Mass and frequent it, and in celebrating it, recall God's instruction to Moses to have reverence for His presence: "take off your shoes, for the place on which you stand is Holy Ground. I am the God of your fathers – the God who is: I am who I am".

Dear Brothers and Sisters you stand on Holy Ground, stand firm!

