

## **MASS FOR THE FEAST OF ST MUNGO 2011**

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

We gather once more to celebrate the Solemnity of our heavenly patron, St Mungo in this lovely church dedicated to him, in the shadow of the pre-reformation Cathedral which bears his name.

It has been my custom over the years to use this feast day sermon to reflect on the life of the Church in our midst over the previous 12 months.

It has been a year marked by some hugely significant events. It was a year in which I ordained three priests who later accompanied me to the Holy Land on a pilgrimage of thanksgiving. Three permanent deacons followed them for ordination at our Pro-Cathedral of St Mary's in Calton, and a large number of our clergy and religious celebrated jubilees of ordination and profession.

We look back on 2010 from the vantage point of this feast.

This Mass is in a sense a historic occasion, for we use for the first time the new Mass prayers approved in September of last year by the Congregation for Divine Worship in Rome. Already we have heard the Collect or opening prayer, and shortly we will hear sung for the first time the preface which admirably serves as both biography of the saint and stimulus to action for his spiritual children ...

*“You called St Kentigern from his childhood  
to the preaching of the word,  
and made him outstanding in holiness,  
so that, perfected in virtue and fearlessly burning with zeal for you,  
he might carry out your holy will in all things,  
through Christ our Lord”*

There is an old Latin phrase which states *lex orandi, lex credendi*, and sometimes added to that we find the words *lex vivendi*.

Loosely translated that means that the words of our prayer are important because they express our beliefs and those beliefs determine our actions.

And so applying that formula to the words we have just heard we can see that we, Kentigern's children, are called to that same quadruple vocation as our patron ... to be, as the preface notes:

- Attentive to the Word of God
- Outstanding in personal holiness
- Inspired in our apostolate
- Faithful in following God's will

Those messages were regularly proclaimed over the last year in the lead up to, and especially on the occasion of the Holy Father's historic visit to our city which will always mark this year as outstanding and memorable. Pope Benedict's sermon at Bellahouston contains a great wealth of material for our study and pastoral practice, and we should not neglect that precious gift.

His specific appeals to different groups within the Church echo particularly strongly ... to priests, to bishops, to educators, to lay people and to the youth.

I would urge all of you to make the time in the coming weeks and months – perhaps as an exercise during Lent – to re-read, prayerfully and attentively that address and make of it a plan of life and an inspiration to holiness.

One area which the Holy Father emphasised both in Glasgow and later in his journey to Britain was the importance of ecumenism in the life of the Church.

Just a few miles from this church he said: "I note with great satisfaction how Pope John Paul's call to you to walk hand in hand with your fellow Christians has led to greater trust and friendship with the members of the Church of Scotland, the Scottish Episcopal Church and others. Let me encourage you to continue to pray and work with them in building a brighter future for Scotland based upon our common Christian heritage."

Over the last year there have been several highlights in our ecumenical engagements. I am thinking of the anniversary celebrations which took place in the summer for the centenary of the 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference which the Holy Father noted led to the modern ecumenical movement. Later in the year we took part in the commemoration of the Reformation Parliament of 1560.

I have said on more than one occasion that we can hardly “celebrate” the divisions which were the fruit of the Reform in Scotland – what the Holy Father termed the “rupture” of the Church - nevertheless we needed to mark the fact of the Reformation Parliament of 1560 and acknowledge its causes, effects and legacy.

I believe we have walked that rather delicate path of “marking” without “celebrating” well over the past year and I believe there has been appreciation on the part of our separated brethren that we have been sensitive and respectful in so doing, and they have been similarly understanding of our position.

Ecumenism is an area to which I have devoted much of my time and energy as a bishop, and one of my responsibilities is membership of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity in Rome.

This year has seen the arrival of a new President for that commission – a close collaborator of the Holy Father, the Swiss Archbishop Kurt Koch. I had the pleasure of meeting him in the autumn during the Plenary Assembly of that Council when he called for a renewed commitment on the part of all churches to the original goal of ecumenism, namely full and organic unity of believers in Christ. He stressed that we cannot simply settle for a cosy relationship of benign disunity, but rather must strive to overcome the theological and ecclesiological barriers which separate us and as such do violence to the unity of Christ’s body.

At the end of our Rome meeting, the Pope offered these words of encouragement to participants which I share with you tonight: “In the end, on the ecumenical journey, it is a question of leaving to God what is his alone and of exploring, with seriousness, constancy and dedication, what is our duty ...”

I am confident that here in Glasgow we are conscious of that duty and careful in its fulfilment.

Reflecting on events which are perhaps more directly within our control, I recall with great satisfaction the progress which has been made over the last year in the restoration of our Cathedral. I am delighted to say that we are planning to re-open the Cathedral on Saturday April 9 with a solemn ceremony of Vespers, followed the next day by the majestic liturgical ceremony of rededication of the renewed building. My hope is that over the

succeeding months the Cathedral will be the venue for a series of musical events which will bring many people to the mother church of the Archdiocese, perhaps for the first time. My expectation is that they will leave, as I hope all visitors will, enriched and inspired by their visit.

The Cloister Garden next to the Cathedral will form an integral part of the complex and we anticipate that it too will be ready for April, offering an oasis of peace and tranquillity in the heart of the city, as well as providing the traditional “breathing space” for the cathedral.

I cannot hide from you the fact that this Mass of St Mungo may be the last over which I preside as your Archbishop.

On such an occasion as this I cannot help looking back with much fondness to previous years’ feasts when we have gathered in this church and reflected and prayed together under the patronage of St Mungo, in the wake of whose Feast I was announced as his successor nine years ago tomorrow.

Together much has been achieved, but there is no shortage of challenges still to be met.

As I end this evening, let me return to the start, as it were ... to those new prayers for the Feast we celebrate, and paraphrase the lovely words of the newly approved solemn blessing for this patronal feast day ...

May God, who preordained that Blessed Kentigern should be both pastor and ruler of his Church, be pleased to bestow on you his blessing, that always and everywhere you may know the protection of him whose venerable feast you celebrate this day. And that, by faithfully following his example in this life, you may enter into everlasting joy in the next.

Amen

