

Message to the Parish of Our Lady and St Mark, Alexandria

My dear people

It is indeed a great landmark that you celebrate at this time as you recall the 150th anniversary of the foundation of your parish.

The life of your forefathers in the mid 19th century was in many ways so different from that of today's parishioners. They had little in the way of infrastructure to support their faith, scant financial resources, a burgeoning population to feed and educate ... and yet with the help of God's grace and their own determination they succeeded in laying the groundwork for a success story that has lasted over a century and a half.

Our Lady and St Mark's church has, over the years, changed address, undergone architectural and liturgical changes, been reshaped and redecorated, but what remains the same is its function and its place in the heart of the people of the area. It is first and foremost the "*Domus Dei*" – the house of God, and for countless generations it has been the focal point of all the great rites of passage which mark our lives.

How many are the souls who have received in your parish the bread of life, who have had their sins washed away in the sacrament of penance, who have been baptised, married or been borne towards eternity fortified by the rites of Holy Church ...

Today as you mark your anniversary I wish you the most precious gift of all: the gift of faith - that faith that sustained your parents and grandparents through the darkest of times and which has illuminated the paths of so many in their daily lives right up until our own times.

Our lives today are very different from those of the pioneers who founded the parish, but our challenge is essentially the same – to keep the faith in a challenging environment and pass it on intact to new generations.

In those tasks the parish of Our Lady and St Mark has been singularly successful for a century and half. It is my hope and belief that you will continue to carry out those noble tasks with great effectiveness for many years to come.

Ad multos annos!

With every blessing

+Mario Conti  
Archbishop of Glasgow