

HOMILY FOR RE-OPENING OF ST ANDREW'S CATHEDRAL

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Sunday 10th April 2011

The chair of St Mungo has returned to St Andrew's. For nearly 20 months it has remained at St Mary's Calton while the Cathedral, the Church which takes its name and its dignity from it, underwent a major renovation.

St Andrew's was built between 1814 and 1816, 1200 years after St Mungo established his Christian settlement where the mediaeval Cathedral still stands, the precursor of both city and Archdiocese. Two hundred years had elapsed since the martyrdom of St John Ogilvie at Glasgow Cross in 1615 which marked definitively the triumph of another Christian order over that identifiable by its celebration of the Mass and its adherence to the chair of Peter.

Those intervening years had seen the virtual annihilation of the Catholic Church in the southwest of our country, and the beginnings of its revival with the advent of Catholics from other parts of the mainland and islands of Scotland, and from the shores of Ireland. This immigration, with such consequences for the Catholic Church in Scotland commenced towards the end of the 18th century and increased during the first half of the 19th and continued to do so in tandem with the growing prosperity of Glasgow as an industrial centre. The city offered the prospect of work, though social conditions were appalling.

The first priests to serve the pastoral needs of this immigrant Catholic population hailed, almost without exception, from Lower Banffshire in the North east of Scotland, to which area, St John Ogilvie had also belonged. Among them was one whose name deserves to be remembered, Andrew Scott, a priest of the Lowland district and later Vicar Apostolic of the Western district.

Whilst still serving this area, and sensing the need for a larger place of worship for his growing flock, and supported by his own Vicar Apostolic in Edinburgh, Andrew Scott acquired this site, then at the edge of town, and commissioned the distinguished Scottish architect, James Gillespie Graham, to design and build a chapel, which he dedicated to St Andrew.

Though today this chapel may not be our largest church building, it is still arguably our finest, and has the distinction of being the mother church, directly or indirectly, of the Catholic churches of the West of Scotland. It has, in addition, a place in the architectural history of Scotland as one of the first examples of the revived gothic style.

It marks the resurrection of the Catholic community, remarkably soon after the first Catholic Relief Act of 1778, and before the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829.

The Gospel reading of today's Mass records the raising of Lazarus – a work of Divine mercy. It prompts me to ascribe the glory of the Resurrection of the Church in Glasgow to Our Lord Jesus Christ, our Shepherd King, who “never leaves his flock untended”.

And if this church building describes the faith of those who built it, then I pray that its restoration may carry a similar message in times which, though different from those of our forebears, are nonetheless, equally challenging to Catholic faith and hope.

This flock in early mediaeval days was described by Pope Alexander III as *Specialis Filia Romanae Ecclesiae*, Special Daughter of the Roman Church, a title which reflected its immediate subjection to the Holy See protecting it from the Metropolitan claims of the Archbishop of York, and preparing the way for Scottish independence. The heraldic charge of the crossed keys on the Archdiocesan coat of arms reflects this, while the symbol of a salmon supporting the shield, unique to Episcopal heraldry, alludes to one of St Mungo's legendary miracles: an erring queen was restored to her husband's favour with the ring the salmon held in its mouth when fished from the Clyde.

For several hundred years – from the death of Archbishop James Beaton at Paris in 1603 to the end of the 18th century, Glasgow was without a Catholic Bishop. The Vicars Apostolic, first of the lowland district centred on Edinburgh, and then of the Western District from 1827, cared for the pastoral needs of the faithful. The growth in their numbers and the need to meld Scottish and Irish communities necessitated the appointment of an outstanding English prelate, Mgr Charles Eyre, as Vicar Apostolic in 1869. At the restoration of the Scottish Hierarchy in 1878 he became the first Archbishop of Glasgow in the restored hierarchy and the ring of fidelity could once again be proffered to the Apostolic See of Rome by the Church of Glasgow.

Since then one of its bishops, Archbishop Thomas Winning, was able to welcome Pope John Paul II to the city in 1982. He was subsequently created Cardinal Priest of the Holy Roman Church with the titular church of Sant' Andrea delle Fratte – a church built on the site of the old Scots Hospice. Nine years ago, on the Feast of the

Chair of St Peter, I was inducted as his successor, and last year had the privilege of welcoming Peter's successor to this city. Today I have the joy of renewing in the name of the Archdiocese, and on behalf of the Scottish hierarchy, the allegiance of bishops, clergy and people to the Chair of St Peter, and the privilege also of welcoming the new Apostolic Nuncio to the Court of St James's, Archbishop Antonio Mennini on his first visit to our land.

The feast of the Chair of St Peter, which is a very ancient one, celebrates not so much the bishopric of Rome as the Petrine office itself, which from Apostolic times has been located in what St Ignatius of Antioch referred to as "the district of the Romans".

Pope St Leo the Great in a homily marking the feast says: "One man, Peter, was chosen from the whole world to preside over the calling of all nations, over all the Apostles and all the fathers of the Church. God conferred on this man a great and wonderful share in his power, and when he willed that the rest of the leaders of the Church should have a gift like Peter's, it was only through Peter that he gave whatever he did not refuse to others. That is why Jesus said to most Blessed Peter: 'I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven – and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven'. The right to this power was handed on to the other Apostles and the provisions of this decree have been passed on to all the leaders of the Church. But it was not an idle gesture to put into one man's keeping what was to be communicated to all. This communion was given to Peter in particular, because the example of Peter is put before all the leaders of the Church".

Today we recall with gratitude the example which Peter's successor, Pope Benedict XVI, gave us on his recent visit to the UK, and we pray, at this annual recollection of his election, for his continued well being in spirit, mind and body.

Apart from the Episcopal chair, there are other symbols in the architecture and furnishing of the Cathedral which carry great significance: the ambo on which is inscribed the motto of the Archdiocese: *Floreat Verbi Praeconio*: May it flourish by the proclamation of the Word. From it shortly will be sung the Praeconium Paschale – the proclamation of Easter Joy; the font, the work of the Scottish sculptor, Tim Pomeroy, will be blessed at the Easter Vigil; the altar, to my own design, was built by the marble expert Neil Reid. It is the principle focus of the Church as it is of the worshipping community. It is about to be consecrated.

On it will be placed the offerings of the faithful; round it will be assembled the company of the clergy; at it the Bishop celebrant will pronounce the words of Christ; and from it will be carried the body and blood of Our Blessed Lord, the gift of His sacrifice, to nourish the living stones and build them together to form a temple in which the spirit dwells.

Many contributed to the original building and many more to its restoration. I borrow the following eloquent words of St Augustine of Hippo in expressing my own thanks:

“Above all therefore, let us give thanks to the Lord our God, from whom comes every good endowment and every perfect gift, and let us praise his goodness with all the eagerness of our heart. For in order to build this house of prayer, he has visited the mind of his faithful people; he has stirred their affection; he has granted help; he has inspired those not yet willing to be willing; he has aided the efforts of the goodwill to carry it into action. In this way God ‘who works in his own people both to will and to work for his good pleasure’, has himself begun all these activities and himself completed them.”

May the Lord now bless them all.