

Welcome to His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI

from the Most Reverend Mario Conti, Archbishop of Glasgow

Bellahouston Park 16th September 2010

Most Holy Father,

Praised be Jesus Christ!

Welcome to Glasgow, entitled by one of your predecessors *Specialis Filia Romanae Ecclesiae* - the *Special Daughter of the Roman Church*. Welcome to Scotland, to the whole of which another of your predecessors extended that coveted title. Welcome to the United Kingdom, whose monarch earlier today in the name of all its citizens welcomed you. We, Holy Father, echo that welcome; we form a community of faith obedient to the Gospel, which has been preached in these islands for over fifteen centuries - before the land to our south became England, and that on which you stand Scotland.

You come to us on the actual feast of our first-named missionary Saint Ninian, who, according to a reliable tradition, received his education in Rome and came back ordained to proclaim the Gospel of Christ and to establish His Church.

From Rome also came Saint Augustine, sent by Pope Gregory the Great, your predecessor, whose arrival in Kent coincided with the death on the Holy Island of Iona of Saint Columba, who, with his fellow Irish missionaries, evangelised our Scottish Highlands and Islands. Already a British missionary had taken the faith from these shores to those of Ireland whose citizens recognise in Saint Patrick their great apostle.

Monastic life flourished in our lands, giving us such great saints as Aidan of Lindisfarne and the Venerable Bede.

Centuries later, at the time of the Reformation, devoted men and women were martyred on account of their faith. In this very city Saint John Ogilvie was hanged for his allegiance to the Holy See. Holy Father, in addition to Saint Andrew its patron, Scotland holds dear the memory of a saintly queen, Margaret, whose son David revived the ancient bishoprics. In England, and well beyond, men and women admire Thomas More, Chancellor of the Realm, who suffered death for obedience to his conscience; while another great Englishman whom your holiness means to beatify, John Henry Newman, preached on the primacy of a conscience responsive to the truth.

Welcome, Holy Father, to this spot where your venerable predecessor John Paul II challenged us “for the future to walk hand in hand”, and whereby we have created a warmth of friendship with which Christians throughout the United Kingdom embrace you today in your visit to the lands we love and the communities we serve.

Finally we welcome you, Holy Father, as the Servant of Christ Jesus and the *Servant of the Servants of God*.

Cead Mille Failte: A hundred thousand welcomes!