

# ARCHDIOCESE OF GLASGOW

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**HOMILY PREACHED BY  
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ARCHBISHOP OF GLASGOW  
CELEBRATION OF SOLEMN VESPERS AND INSTALLATION AS ARCHBISHOP  
February 2002**

Dear Friends, Members of the Archdiocese and honoured Guests,

I am very conscious that my first words to you from this Chair will be scrutinised and analysed rather more profoundly than some future homilies I may preach. And it is right that it should be so.

Those who examine the life and work of Pope John Paul II often refer to his first words spoken on the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica on the night of his election. His phrase "do not be afraid" has been a kind of *leit motif* running through the subsequent two and a half decades of his service as successor of St. Peter.

In spite of my limitations I have been called to be the Archbishop and Metropolitan of this great See of Glasgow which is proud to bear the historic title *Specialis Filia Romanae Ecclesiae*, special daughter of the Roman Church.

It seemed particularly appropriate therefore to have my installation on the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter, an ancient commemoration which reminds our Catholic people of the living links of our faith with St. Peter and the Apostles, mediated through their successors.

For like reason, it is natural that I should look to St. Peter for a word of direction and encouragement, and I find it in the first of his two letters contained in the canon of scripture. From Rome shortly before his death under Nero, he writes a sort of summary of the Christian faith, and of the duties, which stem from it relative to God, to fellow members of the Church, and to the wider community under its civic leaders. First of all he addresses the community of faith itself, underlining its vocation:

*You are a chosen race, a community of priest-kings, a consecrated nation, a people God has made his own to proclaim his wonders, for he called you from your darkness to his own wonderful light.* (1 Peter 2, v9).

First of all I want to greet you, my brothers and sisters of the Catholic faith, represented here by both clergy and laity. I embrace you with a bishop's love.

St. Peter sees the vocation of each Christian community as that of following Christ in service of the human family of which it is part. He instructs us:

"For the Lord's sake, respect all human authority: God wants you to do good so that you may silence those fools who ignorantly criticize you. Behave as free people but do not speak of freedom as a licence for vice; you are free men and God's servants. Reverence each person, love your brothers and sisters, fear God and show respect to the emperor."

Dear Friends, I asked that this evening's celebration should be one at which I might meet representatives of all sections of Glasgow's civic, cultural, and religious life. It would thus provide me with an opportunity of paying my respects to all sections of the community and of stretching out the hand of friendship. This hand of friendship is extended first of all to our fellow Christians of other traditions, and then to those of other faith communities whose contribution to the life of this city is so critical to its continuing development. It is extended also to the members of all those institutions which you represent: To Government, national and local; to law; to education and commerce; to industry and the arts; to sport, entertainment, and to the media of communication.

I would like to reflect a little on the nature and character of this friendship, based as it is upon our common humanity and shared experience. It is exercised in respectful dialogue.

There was for us Catholics in 1965 an important day when the late Pope Paul VI signed the Second Vatican Council's constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes* - joy and hope.

The opening words of that text have become a kind of "mission statement" of the modern Catholic Church, and I borrow from it quite unashamedly to describe my own personal resolution as the leader of this community: "the joys and the hopes, and grief's and the anxieties of the men (and women) of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the grief's and the anxieties of the followers of Christ." (GS 1)

I want to say that the Church no longer stands at a critical distance from the society which it addresses. It is not a citadel on a hill or a fortified ghetto. It is a Church at the heart of the city, at the heart of the world; a Church passionately in love with humanity.

In the same constitution we read: "To carry out (its) task, the Church has always had the duty of scrutinising the signs of the times – (a phrase much loved by my predecessor) and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel. Thus, in language intelligible to each generation, she can respond to the perennial questions which men ask about this present life and the life to come, and about the relationship of the one to the other. We must therefore recognize and understand the world in which we live, its expectations, its longings, and its often dramatic characteristics."

Though this document was written some 35 years ago its assessment is still relevant: "Today, the human race is passing through a new stage of its history. Profound and rapid changes are spreading by degrees around the whole world. Triggered by the intelligence and creative energies of man, these changes recoil upon him, on his decisions and desires, both individual and collective, and upon his manner of thinking and acting with respect to things and people."

The authors of this document recognised that: "Advances in biology, psychology, and the social sciences not only bring men hope of improved self-knowledge, but, in conjunction with technical methods, they are also helping men to exert direct influence on the life of social groups." Inevitably "there has arisen a new series of problems, a series as important as can be, calling for new efforts of analysis and synthesis". I hope we will be allowed to make our own contribution to these analyses and syntheses. I would like to think that the voice of the Church, articulated through its leaders, will not be disregarded as a voice from the distant past, as if the past had no relevance to the present, but is heard/heeded as a witness to a tradition of wisdom and an expertise gained over 2000 years of dealing with humanity.

There is in fact a long history of co-operation between the Church and the institutions of this city. Who can forget that in 1451, the co-operative energies of King James II, Pope Nicholas V and Bishop Turnbull of Glasgow resulted in the establishment of the city's first university? Modelled on the University of Bologna, Glasgow was, and has remained, a university in the great European tradition. The university which is such a jewel in the city's crown was born "*ex corde ecclesiae*" – from the heart of the Church.

The old university and its new colleagues give to the city the reputation of being a place of learning and culture, enhanced by its galleries and its vibrant companies of musicians, artists and performers, whose national programmes are directed from this city.

In more recent times, but in that same tradition of promoting learning, the Catholic Church, at considerable cost to its members, established and then entered into partnership with the state for the continuation of a system of primary and secondary education based upon Gospel values and consonant with the faith of its people. This partnership has worked well and the contribution of the Catholic schools sector to Scottish education is widely acknowledged. Does anyone seriously believe that the way to foster a united community is to deprive one section of it of its hard won achievements?

Another area of outstanding contribution from the Church throughout the centuries has been care of the most needy.

From the hospices of early monastic communities to the wide range of charitable works directed towards the poorest people of Glasgow in the 19th and 20th centuries, the Church has sought to fulfill the gospel imperative of love of neighbour.

Many of the religious communities in the Archdiocese were founded precisely to provide services to the poor, the homeless, the sick and the dying.

Following in that tradition Cardinal Winning established a widely respected community social services department in the 1970s.

Today the Archdiocese, working in partnership with civic and national agencies, administers 33 social care projects. Those who benefit range from people with learning or physical disabilities; people with mental health problems; those who misuse drugs; the vulnerable elderly and the vulnerable young – of all faiths and none.

Such projects are a fine example of what can be achieved for the common good, through co-operation between the Church and civil authorities.

Respect, friendship, dialogue, co-operation, these are some of the key words of this address. Indirectly they answer the question as to how we are to face the challenge of residual sectarianism and bigotry which unfortunately at times still mar the face of this great city. We know there are no magic solutions to the problem. We sense that it is going to be an uphill struggle, but we are convinced that ultimately, by all sections of the community working together, and the grace of God coming upon us, ancient animosities will give way to a civilisation of love.

"Do not be afraid," said Pope John Paul II, and we take comfort from his words.

"Bow down" said St. Peter, "before the power of God so that he will raise you up at the appointed time. Place all your worries on him since he takes care of you.... Glory be to him for ever and ever. Amen." (1 Peter 5 vv 6,7,11)

Thank you all for coming this evening, my brother Bishops of the Province of Glasgow and representatives of the clergy and people of the diocese. Thank you to the representatives of the many strands which make up the community of this city. You have not only done me an honour in your attendance, but the Church which I am now unworthily appointed to lead. I have every confidence that we can and will strive together to enable Glasgow to flourish to the glory of God and the well being of all its citizens.

Thank you.