

ARCHDIOCESE OF GLASGOW



**From the Archbishop,
to the
Clergy, Religious and Laity
Archdiocese of Glasgow.
8 March, 2004**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In my Oratory at home in Newlands I have a copy of a painting of St John Ogilvie. Alongside it is a picture of Paddy's Market which is only a few hundred yards from St Andrew's Cathedral. As I celebrate Mass I see these two pictures and they tell me something of the history of the Catholic Church in Glasgow.

The painting of St John Ogilvie is inscribed *Father John Ogilvie of the Society of Jesus, student at the Scots Seminary at Douai who suffered in Scotland on 10th March 1615*. It shows St John with the halter of his hanging around his neck. An angel hands him the palm of martyrdom.

St John has always meant a great deal to me. He was born at Keith in Banffshire some twenty miles from my own birthplace in Elgin. This year we celebrate the 425th anniversary of his birth. He was the son of Calvinist parents, arguably of the first generation of those who at the time of the Reform followed John Knox and the teaching of Calvin.

Like many Scots of his day John went to the continent to pursue his studies. There he fell under the influence of a scripture scholar called Cornelius de Lapide (Van den Steen) and was received into the Catholic Church. The last Catholic Archbishop of Glasgow until the Restoration of the Hierarchy, James Beaton was still alive when John entered the Society of Jesus in 1599 to be ordained in Paris in 1610.

At his own request John returned to his native country, but his ministry was cut short by his betrayal and capture in Glasgow. After extreme suffering he was hanged at Glasgow Cross on 10th March 1615. The principle cause of his martyrdom was his adherence to the primacy of the Pope in matters spiritual. At that time the Church in Glasgow may no longer have been able to call itself "the special daughter of the Roman See", but here was a young Scot affirming his allegiance to the See of Peter in the most public of manners in the heart of the city. We all have reason to be proud of him.

Paddy's Market by the Green is very close to the ford of the River Clyde, its lowest crossing place. The northern bank of the river already crowned with Mungo's Church, became at this point a natural market place. There were sown the seeds both spiritual and commercial of Glasgow's greatness.

The very name "Paddy" is a history in itself. By the end of the 18th century, with the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, waves of immigrants from the poorer parts of Scotland and from Ireland settled in Glasgow to escape poverty at home and make a living for themselves in the industries mushrooming along the Clyde. It was then that another son of Banffshire, Alexander Scott, later to become one of the Vicars Apostolic, came to minister to the increasing Catholic community. It was he who commissioned one of the best architects of the day, James Gillespie Graham, to build what is now St Andrew's Cathedral. It was 200 years almost to the year since the death of St John Ogilvie. It stands as a marvellous tribute to the Faith of our fathers. We cannot but love it.

I have ambitions for the Cathedral, one of which is to erect there a worthy shrine to St John Ogilvie, to help perpetuate his memory, and inspire us in fidelity to Christ and His Church.

Next Wednesday, March 10th, is the Feast of St John Ogilvie and I invite you all to celebrate it with me with Mass in the Cathedral at 7.30 p.m. Let us make this a great profession of our Faith.

Nor do I forget St Patrick whose Feast occurs exactly a week later. Here was another young man who loved Christ and brought a knowledge of him to our forbears. We have in his Feast another opportunity during this Holy Season of Lent to renew the profession of our Faith. I invite you to join me at St Patrick's, Anderston where I will be celebrating Mass on March 17th at 7.30 p.m.

Wishing you all the blessings of this Holy Season,

Yours devotedly in Christ,

Mario Conti

+ Mario Conti
Archbishop

