



St Mary's
Parish

Serving
the
Community

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the
Family

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the
City

Homily of Bishop Dermot Farrell at Mass of Thanksgiving on the Occasion of his Installation as Archbishop of Dublin

“Today, I stand before you more than aware of my own inadequacies. But you and I also stand before God, the giver of gifts ... faith asks us to see life’s difficulties as a time of grace”

Today’s Feast of the Presentation of the Lord is the story of a young woman and a young man who give thanks to God for the gift of their child. It is also the story of two prophetic figures – an older woman and an older man – who recognised the significance of what was unfolding before their eyes. It is on this day that I embrace the ministry which has been entrusted to me by the Church: this morning I assume my role as Bishop of this diocese.

Today, I stand before you more than aware of my own inadequacies. But you and I also stand before God, the giver of gifts (see Matt 6:25–33), who is our hope and our help (see Pss 61:5, 26:1). It is a daunting task, but I am sufficiently acquainted with the calls of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Mary and others to realise that the enormity of the challenge is more than matched by the power of the One who has called me. Like Mary and the prophets of old, in the depth of my shortcomings, I also am called to trust the words of Abraham, our father in faith: “God will provide” (see Gen 22:8, 14). The God who calls us all can be counted on to empower us to respond generously to the call in this local Church.

I am happy to embrace this new mission. I come to you with hope in my heart. It is not a naive hope that everything will be better tomorrow, but a hope born of a conviction that transcends these difficult days through which we are living, and a hope that transcends the limits our own capabilities. Faith is not an invitation to put up with life’s difficulties and frustrations. Rather, faith asks us to see these as a time of grace. This time – both in the crisis that is the global pandemic, and in the many crises confronting the Church – this very time, with all its frustration and fear, is rich with possibilities, already carrying the future, overflowing with Christ (see Walter Burghardt, *Sir, We Would Like to See Jesus*, p. 36). What we do in the coming months and years, how we live out of these challenges and opportunities, will define who we really are as a people of faith. We must embrace the future: after all, today *and* tomorrow are God’s gift to us. Christ goes before his disciples: we follow. Rooted in our heritage, rooted in who we have become, Christ calls us forward (see Matt 4:19, Mark 1:38, John 21:15–18, Gal 1:15–16). The living “Church is always on the move, always going out and never withdrawn into itself. Jesus did not come to bring a gentle evening breeze, but to light a fire on the earth [see Luke 12:49]” (Pope Francis, *Homily at the Opening of the Amazon Synod*, October 6, 2019).

Today is also the day that the Church celebrates the World Day of Consecrated Life, an occasion to thank the Lord for the gift of lives given to God – lifetimes of service, of commitment to the service of the Gospel and the mission of the Church, and of prophetic witness to the presence and significance of Jesus.

I am particularly happy to take up this new role on the World Day of Consecrated Life. The women and men who dedicate their lives to the call of the gospel are at the heart of life of our Church. Without their service, without the presence of their communities, our church would be a very different Church. They have been at the forefront of renewal in the Church, taking bold initiatives, and making significant sacrifices, putting flesh on the hope that was within them (see 1 Peter 3:15). This is not a mission that belongs to the past. In another age, they were at the forefront of addressing the educational, social, and health of those who risked being left behind. Today they continue their prophetic ministry in the service of those whom our society might prefer not to see: those who suffer from addiction, those who struggle to put food on the table, women trafficked, those without a roof over their heads, or a front door of their own. They make bold to assert that Christians “must realise that their responsibility within creation and their duty toward nature and the Creator are an essential part of their faith” (Saint Pope John Paul II, Message for the World Day of Peace, 1st January 1990).

We face the formidable task of ‘preparing the way of the Lord’ (see Mal 3:1—the First Reading of today’s Mass) for the next generation, of discerning what is life-giving in the faith patrimony of the Church, and most of all, of appropriately and effectively bringing good news to the people of our time” (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 40). This will not happen unless people of faith are capable of dialogue with society and culture. This dialogue is vital for the life of the Church that calls itself “Catholic.” How blind we would be to ignore the world! Are not “the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted,” are these not “the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ?” (Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* §1). Are they not the joys and hopes, the griefs and worries of Christ himself? (see John 15:11, Luke 24:11, John 11:35, Matt 26:38, Matt 27:46). Through the working of the Spirit, through the Church – the community of believers – Christ continues to come into our history, into our time; it is women and men who are “capable of speaking with God, of entering into God’s mystery” who make Christ accessible to the culture, and extend the reality of Christ into the world (see, Pope Francis, Homily on Feast of St Joseph, 19th March 2020). We still need the wisdom and experience, the generosity and prayer, of those whom the Lord has called to

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consecrate their lives in love of Him and in the service of their sisters and brothers. We need your guidance and example in finding the right balance between word and silence, between action and acceptance.

I look forward to your ongoing collaboration and support, as *together* we continue to serve the people of the Diocese. "How important it is to dream *together*... By ourselves, we risk seeing mirages, things that are not there. Dreams, on the other hand, are built *together*" (*Fratelli Tutti*, 8). Everyone in this diocese – laity, priests and deacons, religious, all who embrace apostolic charisms, as well as the women and men called to a more contemplative way – has something essential to contribute to the future of the faith in Dublin.

It is the future of the faith that calls us. "If everything remains as it was, if we spend our days content that 'this is the way things have always been,' then [God's] gift vanishes, smothered by the ashes of fear, and by the anxiety of defending the *status quo*" (Pope Francis, *Homily at Opening of the Amazon Synod*, October 6, 2019). Rather than being focused short-sightedly on the glory of the past, and the magnificent institutions which our sisters and brothers before us built – old wineskins, to use the Lord's phrase – we need to accept the responsibility of mission as we experience it now.

It is *how* we embrace this mission that is going to make the difference. We can only do this together. Walking together is the way of community. "Walk[ing] together is the *constitutive way* of the Church" (Pope Francis, Address at the Opening of the 70th General Assembly of the Italian Bishops' Conference, May 22, 2017). It was the way for the disciples who followed Jesus in Galilee: they walked *with* him (see Mark 3:14). It was the way for the disciples on the road to Emmaus – who walked with the stranger in their day of disappointment and confusion (see Luke 24:18). And walking together is the way for the Church in our time. We walk with each other and we walk with our Lord. We need his presence and his word "in order to know what the Spirit, the 'Spirit of Truth' (John 14:17), 'says to the Churches' (Rev 2:7)" (Pope Francis, Address during the Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops [17 October, 2015]).

(To be concluded next week)

THOUGHTS FOR A DAY

Creativity flourishes not in certainty but in questions. Growth germinates not in tent dwelling but in upheaval. Yet the seduction is always security rather than venturing, instant knowing rather than deliberate waiting.

-Sue Monk Kidd

*I entered into unknowing/Yes when I saw myself there/
Without knowing where I was/I understood great things:/I
shall not say what I felt/For I remained in unknowing/
Transcending all knowledge.*

- St John of the Cross



ANNUAL COLLECTION

THIS WEEK

ACCORD is a well known, respected and experienced agency that has in excess of 50 years experience working with couples and individuals supporting them in their Marriages and Relationships.

ACCORD offers a professional counselling service throughout the island of Ireland, through its 55 centres, facilitating couples and individuals to explore, reflect upon and work to resolve difficulties that arise in their marriages and relationships. ACCORD counsellors are very experienced in working with individuals and couples on a wide range of issues and difficulties that arise in their relationships i.e. communication, intimacy, sexual issues, infidelity, problem behaviours, conflict, domestic abuse, health, family issues, finances, loss.

ACCORD accepts and values clients irrespective of their religious or ethnic background. ACCORD's counselling service is based on clients needs and not on their ability to pay.

Counselling can be arranged by contacting any one of ACCORD's 55 centres throughout Ireland. The centre secretary will take contact details and then arrange an appointment to see a counsellor. Outside of centre hours an answering service will be in operation and the secretary will contact clients on returning to the office.

All 55 ACCORD centres offer Marriage and Relationship counselling. Other services offered by ACCORD in many centres include Domestic Abuse Counselling and a Fertility and Well Being Service.

Accord Counsellors are trained to the highest professional standards. ACCORD's Higher Diploma in Counselling is recognised by the National Association for Pastoral Counselling and Psychotherapy for accreditation purposes.

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