

Anniversary Mass of Dedication of St. Peter's Cathedral, 1st October 2017

Homily

(Ezek. 47:1-2, 8-9, 12. Apoc.21:1-5. John 4:19-24)



As we reflect on the significance today's occasion, the anniversary of the Dedication of this Cathedral, we first and foremost give thanks to Almighty God for the graces and blessings which have flowed from here to God's people since its beginning as a church in 1859, and its elevation as the cathedral church of the newly established Diocese of Lancaster in 1924. The prophet Ezekiel in our first reading speaks of the healing waters flowing from the altar of the Jerusalem Temple, a river bringing healing and fruitfulness wherever went. Likewise, the fruits won for us by Christ's death on the cross have been mediated from the sanctuary of this cathedral from generation to generation of believers. It is with gratitude to God that we remember what this house of prayer has meant to so many down the years.

As we look around and admire the grandeur of St. Peter's cathedral, the apostle Peter teaches us that there is another holy building, a spiritual one, constructed out of living stones, of all those who have been baptised. You and I are those individual stones forming God's holy Temple, resting on the corner-stone, which is Christ himself. Put simply, through our baptism we have all been inserted into Christ and have our own part to play in the life of the Church. No believer should ever feel that he or she does not matter; we are all called to live the life of grace, and we nurture that life through our reception of the sacraments. We touch on the mystery of the Church today, the wonder of being called by God to be his son or daughter in Christ. We are God's gracious choice!

The cathedral, with its spire pointing heavenwards, is where we gather, in Christ's words, to worship the Father in Spirit and in truth. Here, as created human beings, we praise and worship our creator, who gives us life, and equally important has brought us into the Kingdom of his beloved Son. Gathered together for the celebration of Holy Mass, we become a community by receiving the single food of the Lord's body and blood. We are made aware in this sacred space that we are brothers and sisters in Christ, and hearing the Scriptures realise that we have to bear one another's burdens on life's pilgrimage of faith.

As with every other cathedral and church, great or small, St. Peter's cathedral is like a staging post for us pilgrim believers, where we find refreshment and encouragement to continue our journey. Our liturgy and worship here are but a reflection of that heavenly liturgy which, please God, awaits us when our life here on earth reaches its term. St. John wonderfully speaks of the new heavens and the new earth, whose centre will be God and the Lamb, where the saints and blessed take their part in that eternal liturgy of heaven. So as we look forward in blessed hope, we give thanks this morning for our cathedral which in its beauty and holiness gives us a glimpse of the glory which one day awaits us. Amen.

+Michael G Campbell OSA
Bishop of Lancaster