

Anniversary of Dedication of St. Peter's Cathedral, 4th October 2015

(1Kings 8:22-23,27-30. 1Pet. 2:4-9; John 4:19-24)



We are recalling today the anniversary of the dedication of this cathedral in 1924, when the diocese of Lancaster was first established. A cathedral church is first and foremost a house of prayer, where we gather to raise our minds and hearts to God in the name of Christ, to praise him, and to pray for our own needs and the needs of the world. So this is a hallowed spot, a sacred place, made holy by the countless prayers of those who have crossed its threshold since it was consecrated in 1859. Our prayers and petitions this morning form but the latest part of that great stream which has arisen to heaven for well over one hundred and fifty years. In his great prayer of dedication for the Jerusalem Temple Solomon asked "that the Lord's eyes may be open day and night towards this house, the place of which you have said, 'My name shall be there'". Our very presence in this sacred building is a prayer itself, and we are in union before God with all who have knelt and prayed here before us.

The apostle Peter has reminded us that there is also another sacred building, but one not built of stones. This is the Temple of which Christ is the cornerstone and each one of us, through our baptism, forms a living stone in that Temple. St. Peter is teaching us that we ourselves are a spiritual Temple where God dwells. For this reason he calls us a 'chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation....' We do have a wonderful dignity and are reminded of that dignity when we enter this Temple which is the work of human hands. If only we could realise how the most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, have come to be among us, and dwelling within us!

The Cathedral is of course the mother church of the diocese, the seat of the bishop, and the symbol of the unity of the diocese. Lancaster diocese is a portion of the Catholic Church, part of the universal Church dispersed throughout the world. Through the ministry of the bishop and the dispensation of the sacraments in every church in the diocese Christ himself walks among us, bringing us his mercy, healing, his love and his tenderness. In union with the other bishops around the world and in communion with Pope Francis, the diocese of Lancaster is an integral part of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, as we profess in the Creed. The cathedral is a very special place.

I ask you to pray for the diocese today on this feast of the Dedication of the Cathedral, for its bishop, clergy, religious and people, that we may truly be God's living Temple, worshipping him in spirit and in truth, 'for he has called us out of darkness into his wonderful light, in Peter's words, 'once we were not a people, but now we are God's people.' Amen.

+Michael G Campbell OSA
Bishop of Lancaster

