

## Homily for the Funeral Mass for Bishop Joseph Devine

A few moments ago we listened to a beautiful passage from the Book of Revelation, the Apocalypse, and the image of the new eternal Jerusalem from St John's Vision, gave us a picture of the Church in heaven which then reflects onto its structure here on earth. The temple is the Lord with the Lamb by his side - through the Lamb worship and glory is offered to God and all the sacrificial offerings due to God and expressed in the one eternal offering of the Lamb. The new Jerusalem has 12 gates with the names of the 12 tribes of Israel above them and the 12 foundation stones with the names of the 12 apostles of the Lamb inscribed upon them. We sense in St John's vision the central place of the Old and the New Testaments, the Old and the New Covenants. In the dispensation of the New Covenant the community of faith stems from the Apostles of the Lamb and the testimony they lived and died for. Just as their place of honour is acknowledged eternally in the heavenly city so their position as the first witnesses to the faith and upholders of the full tradition of that faith falls to their successors here on earth - the bishops of the Church. It is a very high calling we have received as bishops and one in which we depend on the grace of the Holy Spirit and the gifts given to us to lead the Church in our own Dioceses. It is proper therefore today at his Funeral Mass to give thanks to God for Bishop Devine's ministry as the Bishop of Motherwell and all it entailed through his 30 years of ministry in this Diocese, and his earlier years as Auxiliary in Glasgow Archdiocese. A lot of responsibility is placed upon a Bishop's shoulders, as he strives to be moulded in the image of Jesus the Good Shepherd, and it is proper to be grateful for all the good done while acknowledging moments of difficulty.

At the Mass Chrism each year the Bishop asks the people to pray for him "that in your midst I may be made day by day a living and more perfect image of Christ, the Priest, the Good Shepherd, the Teacher, and Servant of All." I would like to reflect on Bishop Devine's Life and Ministry through the lens of these four Images of Christ.

Bishop Devine, the only child of devout Catholic parents, responded to the call to priesthood from an early age, leaving home and his loving parents to study at St Mary's College Blairs and St Peter's College, Cardross. After ordination in St Andrew's Cathedral Glasgow on 29th June 1960 he went to the Scots College in Rome to do a doctorate in philosophy at the Gregorian University - as well as gaining the doctorate he won the gold medal for the outstanding doctoral student in his year group. He shared these exciting years in Rome, while the Second Vatican Council was happening and the new Scots College being built, with Bishop John Cunningham. When they came together as members of the Bishops Conference much later in life the extent of their reminiscing on these happy days was only exceeded by their reflections and opinions on the latest happenings at Parkhead. When his studies were over, Bishop Devine had a very full and varied priesthood in the Archdiocese of Glasgow - private secretary to Archbishop Donald Scanlan, assistant priest at St Robert Bellarmine's and St Joseph's, Helensburgh, lecturer in philosophy at St Peter's Cardross, assistant chaplain at the Catholic Chaplaincy at the University of Glasgow. Archbishop Winning, with whom he remained a great friend, appointed him as Vicar Apostolic for the Lay Apostolate, and then sought his appointment as Auxiliary Bishop along with Bishop Charles Renfrew. He was ordained Bishop, with the title of Bishop of Voli, on 31st May 1977, and served in the Archdiocese until his appointment as Bishop of Motherwell in May 1983. In Motherwell he succeeded Bishop Francis Thomson and served as Diocesan Bishop until his resignation was accepted by Pope Francis in May 2013. His therefore was a lengthy episcopal ministry in this Diocese and it was marked by his dedication above all to his identification with Christ the Priest.

As priest, the Bishop in Motherwell has a very full programme in celebrating the Mass and sacraments in our parishes and schools. There is not much respite, which is a good sign as the people want to have the Bishop as the celebrant at the special parish and Diocesan events. The annual round of confirmations is a big part of the Bishop's ministry and Bishop Devine followed this through year by year - I think he was always conscious of the clock in regard to the length of the Liturgy and took some pleasure in beating his own record. Another wonderful aspect of the Bishop's ministry is the celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, and through the years a good number of the priests and most of the Deacons present today have been ordained by him. We don't forget the bishop who ordained us as that special link is essential in the passing on of the apostolic ministry in the Church and the priest's communion with the Bishop in the Presbyterate of the Diocese. Bishop Devine was a man for numbers and statistics and he would recall at times the number of priests he had buried. He didn't forget people and the details of their lives, and this was particularly true in regard to the Diocesan clergy who had passed away. In the Diocese therefore it will be good to continue to honour his memory and that of all our deceased priests and deacons and to continue to pray for them. It was worth mentioning also that in the later years of his ministry as Diocesan Bishop there was an increase in Vocations to the priesthood and a number of the men whom he accepted are to be ordained shortly.

As Shepherd of the Diocese the Bishop has to care for all his flock and to lead in seeking the pastoral vision and priorities for the Diocese. Looking back at Bishop Devine's Ministry he put a lot of effort into pastoral planning and renewal, both for the clergy and the lay faithful. In conjunction with Archbishop Winning he introduced the Renew Programme into Motherwell and also the Ministry to Priests Programme. Much was done and those who responded and kept going have benefited from the vision he presented and the initiatives put in place. Like many areas of life, pastoral plans need new vigour and fresh blood and in reviewing our late Bishop's very laudable efforts we need to renew our commitment as a Diocese to engage with the people of today and to renew our commitment to mission and evangelisation.

Bishop Devine had experience as a lecturer in philosophy and some involvement in pastoral ministry at Glasgow University so he had a natural inclination towards education and those who provided it. An important part of his work for the Church across Scotland was as Chair of the Catholic Education Committee and the work of the Scottish Catholic Education Service. Catholic Education in the Secondary and Primary Schools across the Diocese was a vital area of Catholic life and mission and he was always keen to visit the schools and offer encouragement to teachers and others involved in the provision of Catholic Education. As a bishop also he was required to teach and promote the Catholic faith and through the years he spoke out strongly on those issues he thought it necessary to explain or defend the Catholic faith within our community and in Scottish society. Here Cardinal Winning was very much his model, and while they were very much one in matters of faith and morals, it would be fair to say that their political preferences may have differed. In his earlier years as a Bishop the Catholic Church was probably confident in itself and assertive in what it said but, as time went on, criticism of bishops grew and it became more challenging when speaking publicly as crises engulfed the Church and demands upon bishops grew to give answers for what had gone wrong.

The service of the Bishop in the Catholic community has many different facets and sometimes it is difficult to keep up with varying demands brought before us. To be the servant of all as the Lord asks us to be can be complicated, especially when called upon to meet and deal with people who are upset or even angry. I am sure Bishop Devine did his best in this regard and sought to be attentive to those who needed his help.

I succeeded Bishop Devine as Bishop of Motherwell on 23rd June 2014 but had already been the Apostolic administrator of the Diocese from 31st May 2013 after Bishop Devine's resignation on reaching the age of 75 had been accepted by the Holy Father. In recalling this I think it must have been difficult for Bishop Devine to be stepping aside after his 30 years as Bishop of Motherwell and another Scottish Diocesan Bishop taking his place. It must have been hard for him to quietly accept what had happened. There were other times too in his episcopacy when he encountered difficult moments and these left a mark on his ministry. I mention this not to bewail what he went through as a Bishop but rather to say it is what is to be expected in this ministry, in which difficult situations arise and you are expected to take hard knocks. Pope Francis, in his Apostolic Exhortation on the Call to Holiness *Gaudete et Exultate*, highlighted this is a path all the faithful may be called to follow at some stage in our lives, but there can be no surprise in this as it is the path the Lord himself trod - as St Paul reminded us today "Christ was humbler yet even to accepting death, death on a cross". The Lord himself instructed us also to take our cross every day and follow him. At times this can be a heavy cross for Bishops and the man before us today had his share of it. In acknowledging this I pay tribute to his willingness to persevere in his service of the Lord and his Church even in adversity. He had a strong will and determination to carry out his duties as Bishop and I am sure his people appreciated his faithful service.

Through his own struggles he has a sympathy for those who came to him in difficulty, particularly members of the clergy. He may not have been inclined to question people too much about the circumstances they found themselves in but rather to provide the practical help which appeared necessary in a moment of crisis. A number of priests have commented to me about the kind way he dealt with them and the generosity of his response in offering whatever help was necessary. He was a "can do" sort of person who wanted to get things done now rather than waiting until tomorrow. He certainly could be impatient if there too much discussion and meetings became protracted.

As his life on earth has drawn to a close we gather today to offer our Requiem Mass for Bishop Joe and we ask Almighty God to forgive any human failings he had and prepare him to be received into eternity, the new Jerusalem, in the company of Our Lady, St Joseph, the Apostles, and all the Saints. May the mysteries of the Lamb, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, which he was privileged to celebrate here as a priest and bishop, be now his salvation through all eternity.

Our thoughts and prayers are with those who feel his loss most of all - his relatives and close friends, particularly those who were good to him through these last difficult years of his life. May you be rewarded for your patience and kindness.

May he rest in peace Amen.