

Scotland Celebrates The Centenary



Ceud Mile Failte - HE Keith Patrick Cardinal O'Brien being greeted by Province 16 Director Tony Godden, and, right: the Catena front cover.

On the weekend of 14-15th June 2008 almost 200 Catenians and family members from all over Scotland and beyond, a good number from the South and several from Ireland and even South Africa, met in Edinburgh to celebrate the centenary of the foundation of the Association.

Homily Preached By HE Keith Patrick Cardinal O'Brien

At Scottish Catenian Centenary Mass

St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh, 15th June 2008

(Extracts taken from the Homily)

It is indeed a great privilege being here with you today as we celebrate the Centenary Mass of the Foundation of the Catenian Association. This is also "Fathers Day" and with the great number of Catenians being themselves fathers of families we wish every blessing not only on the members of the Catenian Association themselves but also on their families and friends.

HISTORY OF THE CATENIANS:

Perhaps the name "Catenian" is one barely known to many members of the congregation this morning. The Association owes its existence to the vision of Louis Charles Casartelli who became the Bishop of Salford, England in 1903. At that time there were only one and a half million Catholics in England and Wales and they were still viewed with suspicion by many of the population. In 1908 a group of professional and business men in Manchester under their leader, John O'Donnell, asked for a meeting with their Bishop at which they requested a blessing on their 'Association', the infant Catenian Association.

In England at the beginning of the 20th century, there were signs of an emerging Catholic middle class with Catholics previously having been divided between the very rich landed Catholic gentry and the very poor including the recently immigrant Irish who had arrived over the previous 50 years.

In his first pastoral letter in October 1903 Bishop Casartelli wrote of "the signs of the times" and called on Catholic laymen "To go forth to all the interests of the Commonwealth of which we are part." He went on to say that he "wanted the laity to play their role

in matters social, municipal, philanthropic, educational, artistic, literary in which we may use the powers we enjoy".

In fact the Bishop was calling on Catholic laity to play their full role in society. Consequently the Catenian Association was founded and has the same spirit of the founding brothers in 1908 as in this present year of 2008 with their motto being: "Strengthening family through friendship and faith". There are many aspects of the apostolate of the Catenian Association which I could single out at this present time. However the Catenian Association has always been primarily a social organisation through which deep and lasting friendships have been formed; friendships built on the firm foundation of a shared faith. And whatever the challenges faced at this present time Catenians support each other and their families with prayer and practical support. But the Catenians are not simply concerned exclusively with themselves; they are described as "proudly Catholic" and many take an active role in their parishes, schools, dioceses and other Church organisations. That active role in the Church and civic life is needed now more than ever before! So, in my words this morning I single out two aspects of their valued apostolate which are vitally important in the Church and in the world of today: Catholic family life and encouragement of vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

CATHOLIC FAMILY LIFE:

As their worldwide Centenary celebrations take place there are also speakers of international repute addressing the overall theme of promoting "Catholic family life" at various gatherings. I myself when appointed Archbishop and then later as Cardinal have seen the promotion of Catholic family life as one of the goals of my episcopacy. I know that the Catenian Association, while being a social Association in itself, does promote the interests of the members and their families by the ways in which they meet and socialise. They see it as important for families to be together with their family life based on solid Catholic principles. At times this is not easy and it has been incumbent, linked as they are with the hierarchies of each country in which they are established,

- On Saturday afternoon members attended a reception in the imposing Scottish Parliament building at Holyrood. Tony Godden, Director of Province 16, introduced the principal speakers, MSP Paul Martin who, together with providing the official welcome, organised a visit to the debating chamber for all present, and the Most Reverend Mario Conti, Archbishop of Glasgow, who spoke eloquently and appreciatively of the contribution of Catenians to the life of the Church.

In the evening a celebratory dinner was held in the Hilton Grosvenor Hotel. Principal guests included Grand President David Taylor, His Eminence Keith Patrick, Cardinal O'Brien, the Most Reverend Archbishop Mario Conti of Glasgow, the Rt Reverend Vincent Logan, Bishop of Dunkeld, and

the Rt Reverend Bishop Ian Murray, Bishop of Argyll and the Isles. The principal speakers at the dinner were Cardinal O'Brien and the Grand President. After the meal the Cardinal accepted, on behalf of SCIAF, a cheque for £932 raised at the Scottish Catenian Family Weekend held earlier in the year. The Grand President accepted an additional sum of £470 on behalf of the Association's "Water for Life" campaign.

On Sunday morning Mass was concelebrated in St Mary's Cathedral by the Cardinal, Archbishop, and Bishops, with Association members joining the congregation to hear the Cardinal in his homily recount the history of the foundation of the Association in 1908, and the work of the Catenians since then, in supporting and strengthening family values.



Distinguished guests at the banquet



Cardinal O'Brien and Archbishop Conti with Grand President David Taylor



Archbishop Conti speaks in the Scottish Parliament Building

for Catenians to speak out not so much as members of the Association but in their own professional lives and places of work. As a Bishop I myself have found it necessary to speak out against the lowering of moral standards in our country at this present time. You must fight the same battles as myself; together we must maintain the same standards in the Church and in the world. The promotion of Catholic family life must always remain one of the vital goals of the Catenian Association which must be a firm foundation for everything which the members try to accomplish in their apostolate. You must be increasingly aware of your own responsibilities in your professional lives as I am aware of those same responsibilities because of my own vocation.

PROMOTION OF VOCATIONS TO THE PRIESTHOOD AND RELIGIOUS LIFE:

While the Catenian Association is essentially a social association, prayer and especially prayer for vocations, and support for Bishops and priests, is an important aspect of the role of every Catenian. Throughout this Centenary year the members of the Association are planning the celebration of 1,500 Masses for Vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life throughout the world on their patronal feast day of SS Peter and Paul, the 29th June.

Each Catenian Circle organises regular Masses for vocations and members also support priests at a personal level and by being active participants in parish, school and diocesan life. Prayers of Vocations to the Priesthood and the religious life are said at every Catenian meeting and each Circle is given a specific date on which to arrange a public Mass for vocations. In effect this means that on virtually every weekday of the year somewhere in the world a Mass for Vocations is being offered on behalf of the Catenian Association. Rooted as they are in strengthening family life, each Catenian family must be a seed bed for Vocations. Catenian families should almost "breed vocations" and ensure vocations come from their own families, as well as praying for vocations from the families of others. In the Catholic atmosphere of a Catenian home; where better for

young people to realise the ideals of Priesthood and religious life as members of the Catenian Association continue their lay apostolate in union with their priests and under the direction of their local bishops, especially under the direction of our Holy Father the Pope.

CONCLUSION:

I hope that I have given some idea of the apostolate of the Catenian Association which has a social purpose but an invaluable outreach from the Church to the world with its strengthening of Catholic family life and its ongoing apostolate for vocations.

It was the desire of those planning the Catenian centenary celebrations that there should be some lasting memorial that would give others reason to celebrate. Consequently, the ciborium which will be brought forward at the Offertory, engraved with the Catenian logo and gifted to the Cathedral, will be an ongoing reminder to those using it of the Centenary of the Catenian Association and of their ongoing prayer and care for vocations.

Rather than thinking only of some material commemorative plaque or stained glass window, the Catenians have wisely decided on a major appeal to provide clean water throughout the world, to give life and hope for those in desperate need in Africa and especially Zimbabwe. Money raised will be entrusted to our aid agencies including here in Scotland SCIAF as members of CARITAS that group of international Catholic charities that has long experience of successful humanitarian projects throughout the world.

It must be remembered that when Jesus sent out His disciples He sent them in twos to carry on their valued apostolate with each person strengthening the other. That is what happens in the Catenian Association. In celebrating this Mass of Thanksgiving for them and their colleagues throughout the world, I wish them every blessing as they thank God for the past, as they receive strength for their present apostolate, and as they look forward with confidence to the years which lie ahead.

+Keith Patrick Cardinal O'Brien