



# Grand President's Speech To Conference 2010

**M**y Lord Bishop, Reverend Dom Antony, fellow members of Grand Council, my dear Brothers: My Conference theme and my theme for the year is Love.... Hope .... Faith, closely correlated to and with Membership.

Let me begin with a question..... Quo Vadis...whither goest thou? Don't answer the question now but I invite you to do so at a time when you have a quiet moment and in a contemplative mood with Our Lord.

### Epic Film

You may recall the question is the title name of the epic film QUO VADIS. The film starred Finlay Currie as Peter the Apostle and Buddy Baer as the Christian slave Ursus. I first saw the film approximately 50 years ago, and the scenes that gripped my imagination then and I can still vividly recall are those of the Christian quarter of Rome, a blazing inferno, the escape gates closed, and the Christians being burnt to death or killed by falling debris and buildings. The camera then pans across to Emperor Nero's Palace and depicts him famously playing his harp, and singing while Rome was burning. The cameras then slowly move across the suburbs of Rome about two miles from the city centre, and focus on Peter, staff in hand; Peter was with Ursus the Christian slave, they were fleeing the city, they stop momentarily, and look back at Rome burning, and almost immediately Peter heard a voice saying "Quo Vadis... where are you going Peter?" Peter plunged his staff in the ground, it immediately flowered with white lilies, and then Peter and the slave retraced their steps back to the city, to help their fellow Christians. Peter's fate in Rome is subsequently well chronicled.

### A Journey of Faith

I bring these dramatic scenes before you as I believe we too are on a journey of Faith which I fervently believe is supported by what I call our Catenian Journey. For me, there is no doubt our Catenian journey is intrinsically tied in to our Faith journey, no not replacing our

Faith journey, but our Catenian journey acts as a staff or prop to help our Faith journey.....

I began by posing the question "whither goest thou"? I want to relate this to our Catenian journey. Often I hear the question or statements made, What do Catenians do? What do we stand for? We are only a dining club; we are only a social network. To try and answer these 'questions' and address the 'statements' let me momentarily take you back to the birth of our Association.



We read in the History of our Association that, at the suggestion of Bishop Casartelli, our Association was founded in 1908 at a time when Catholics were regarded by "society" as second class citizens. Catholics were openly discriminated against in many ways, particularly in a) Catholics securing gainful employment and b) Catholics who were struggling to gain "status" but amongst whom there was little or no cohesion.

Bishop Casartelli identified this dilemma, called together some business men and founded the CHUMS (which later in 1910 was changed to The Catenian Association) with John O'Donnell as founding Chairman or President. This leads to another interesting question. Why did Bishop Casartelli in such challenging times for Catholics suggest starting up a dining club or social network? The answer to this I believe is found in the writings of St Paul.

Repeatedly in his writings St Paul uses the Greek word KOINONIA, meaning much more than a social group or community. The word KOINONIA expresses the reciprocal situation of Christians between themselves; we all have a common dependence on Christ and the Holy Spirit. It is a communion and therefore, just as the early Christians and the founding Catenians, we now, as Catenians, share and live fellowship and friendship centred on our Faith; I repeat, a communion, a common sharing, totally dependent on Christ and the Holy Spirit.

### Relevance of Our Association

This leads to the next question, "What is the relevance of our Association today? Brothers, I have no doubt the interpretation I have applied in our shared fellowship and friendship (in other words the aims of our Association) centred on our Faith, as a communion dependent on Christ and the Holy Spirit, is as important today as when St Paul walked on this earth or a hundred years ago when our Association started. Why? Because when we were founded 100 years ago Catholics were individually and collectively being punitively treated. Today some may claim this is not relevant, sure, that has changed but the problems and difficulties we face concerning our Faith have also changed, note, I say changed, not gone away. Today as individuals we may not be under individual threat, but, in recent times, something more fundamental is happening; yesterday, today and tomorrow, my dear brothers, the very foundations of our Christian Faith, the tenets that we cherish and believe are under attack, our Christian values are being eroded and undermined.

### Human Rights

I have no doubt if Jesus and His Disciples were teaching us today, they would be in breach of Human Rights Legislation, Equality Laws, and a raft of other laws, and I am certain would find themselves facing severe demonstrations and be in serious trouble. If there is any lingering doubt let me give some recent examples of blatant attacks on the teachings of our Church.