

60th ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEDICATION OF HOLY FAMILY CHURCH

In this Roman Catholic church dedicated to the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph generations of the faithful have been able to receive the grace of Our Lord. It is the grace which God made Man, who is seated at the right hand of the Father and who is forever present for us in the Church, given to us so freely so that we might know the forgiveness of sins and be forever turned towards He alone who is our salvation and the salvation of all the world.

In this place, the grace of the Sacraments is made known and the darkness of our lives can be dispelled as we look upon He who is God from God, light from light, true God from true God.

This Roman Catholic church, as with Holy Trinity Church, was built as a memorial to those who died in war and built at a time of great turmoil and uncertainty but by which the faithful found consolation in the Faith of Our Lord.

This church has been a witness to the drama of the twentieth century and now the twenty-first century: the post-war years, then war in Korea and then Vietnam, the time of the Second Vatican Council, the confusion of the decades of the 1960's and the 1970's, the pandemic, and the ever-changing nature of our society. But what a church can give to us is a sense of stability by embedding itself in the one, true Faith. This, then, becomes an anchor amidst turmoil, and a rudder to keep us on the right course toward our salvation.

In this place, many have borne faithful witness to the faith of the Church, and this place has been the place of the rites of the holy Roman Catholic Church, the holy sacrifice of the Mass, witnessed the grace of the Sacraments,

being a place celebrating the birth of a child and a refuge offering consolation at a time of grief.

It is on this altar, consecrated sixty years ago, that the holy sacrifice of the Mass has been offered ever since and it is this holy sacrifice of the Mass that is the medicine and food which strengthens us to battle against the discouragement and to stand strong in the “good fight” (II *Tim.* 4:7).

Many people long for a closer union with Our Lord, so we must go to where He is. It is in Our Lord’s churches, in His real presence in the Blessed Sacrament, that we find Him. There are many who disparage the need for churches and say that God can be worshipped anywhere. This was seen particularly during the pandemic when churches were closed and we were told that the building is not the Church, but that we are the Church. Only those who have abandoned the real presence of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament could hold to such an idea. Only those who think of the Sacrament of the Eucharist as nothing more than a symbol or a sign or just holy bread could not see the beauty and the majesty of building a place in which we know with certainty God dwells.

Man is a physical as well as a spiritual being. Our humanity is body and soul. The desires of our souls find expression through our bodies. Our Faith is one of incarnation, of the spiritual finding a place in the material. In the beginning, God created the Garden of Eden as a place in which He could dwell with those He loved, Adam and Eve. In the book of Genesis it says: “the Lord God [was] walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze” (3:8). After the expulsion from the garden, God would meet Moses at the burning bush and he would say, “Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground” (3:5). During the Exodus, as the Hebrews travelled from slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land, Moses would set up a tent called the Tent of Meeting outside the camp and it would be there that he would speak with God and, as it says in the Book of Exodus, “everyone who sought the Lord

would go out to the tent of meeting” (33:7). Later God would meet Moses and give to him the Ten commandments on Mount Sinai, a place so holy that God would say, “No one shall come up with you, and do not let anyone be seen throughout all the mountain; and do not let flocks or herds graze in front of that mountain” (*Ex. 34:3*). And it was God who commanded that a tent, or tabernacle, be built to house the Ark of the Covenant which held the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments as well as the manna that fell from heaven to feed His hungry people. Later, it was King Solomon who would build the Temple in Jerusalem in which the Ark of the Covenant was placed in the Holy of Holies, a place held to be so sacred that only the High Priest was permitted to enter and then only on one day of the year as he brought the blood of the lamb sacrificed and burn incense. And it was Our Lord who said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (*Jn 2:19*), for He was speaking of the Temple that was His body. And it is this Temple that is Our Lord’s body that means that the faithful have continued to build places of worship, for in these places is the real presence of Our Lord—His Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity.

In the rite of the Dedication of a Church from the Roman rite it says, “Through His death and resurrection, Christ became the true and perfect temple of the New Covenant and gathered a people to be his own. This holy people, made one as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one, is the Church, that is, the temple of God built of living stones, where the Father is worshipped in spirit and in truth. Rightly, then, from early times ‘church’ has also been the name given to the building in which the Christian community gathers to hear the word of God, to pray together, to receive the Sacraments, and to celebrate the Eucharist. Because the church is a visible building, it stands as a special sign of the pilgrim Church on earth and reflects the Church dwelling in heaven”.

Over the past few years both churches of our parish, Holy Trinity Church and Holy Family Church, have been restored so that the beauty of these houses of God, would be enlivened. It is this work which we have undertaken that is an

expression of our love of the Lord, of our love of the Faith, of our love of the Church. It is right and fitting that these works be undertaken because by them we are giving back to God what He has given to us. By using what Our Lord has granted to us, we return to Him.

This church dedicated to the Holy Family has seen great works undertaken over the past couple of years. Outside of the church the original lighting was restored and more lighting added to show the beauty of the building. The broken tiles of the roof and the falling guttering was replaced, many of the doors which were falling apart have been replaced and all the doors repainted to give a wonderful lift to the facade. Inside the church, the lighting was replaced so as to brighten this place, the electrical switchboard was upgraded and brought up to contemporary standards, the sacred vessels have been cleaned and restored, the old carpet which was tattered and torn has been replaced (I only wish it had been replaced sooner because it is a much softer carpet and would have been so much more comfortable for all those nights that I have spent sleeping on the floor here of this church to protect it over the years from vandalism). Moreover, the statues of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph which adorn the side altars and which were crumbling and decaying have been refurbished and given colour which, as many said to me, has brought them to life, and the corpus of Our Lord which hangs on the cross above the sanctuary has been repaired and painted so that it becomes now a vigorous sign of the sacrifice and triumph of the Holy Cross. Soon, the Stations of the Cross will be restored so as to preserve these for those who will follow after us. All these works are a mark of devotion to this place, they are a means of honouring those who came before and who gave to this place these symbols of devotion, and those who have made these works possible by their donations and their support give these as an oblation to almighty God, so thanks be to God for their generosity.

In this place, as with all Catholic churches, we should find a refuge, a safe harbour amidst the storms of the world, a place in which we can be carried by the arms of the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the Angels and Saints to the arms of Our Lord who awaits us day and night in the tabernacle, the holy of holies.

In the Roman Catholic Mass, when the priest has made the offering of the bread and the wine, he bows to the altar and prays quietly: "With humble spirit and contrite heart may we be accepted by you, O Lord, and may our sacrifice in your sight this day be pleasing to you, Lord God". In this way, together with all the faithful, he prepares to enter into the heart of the mystery of our salvation, into the heart of the heavenly liturgy. The altar of the sacrifice becomes the place where Heaven and earth meet; the centre of the one Church that is heavenly yet at the same time a pilgrim on this earth where, amidst the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God, disciples of the Lord proclaim His Passion and His death until He comes in glory (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 8). It is this and every Mass that sees already Our Lord's triumph over sin and over the world, and in the mystery shows the radiance of the Church, "the spotless spouse of the spotless Lamb. It is she whom Christ loved and for whom He delivered Himself up that He might sanctify her" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 6).

Let us pray that the the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, and her most chaste spouse, St. Joseph may intercede for us always, to guard us and to guide us to their Son, Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, so that by His Holy Cross, we may know and see His redemption of all the world and know through our pilgrim life on this earth the grace of the holy sacrifice of the Mass and the Sacraments so that, one day, we, too, might come to live in the eternal house of God and join forever with the Angels and the Saints in the liturgy of heaven.