

THE WORK OF THE ANGELS

Domine bonum est nos hic esse. LORD, IT IS WONDERFUL FOR US TO BE HERE: words of St. Peter in today's Gospel. It is wonderful for us to be here in the transfiguring presence of the Lord Jesus in this beautiful church of St. Patrick's that Fr. Alexander has worked so hard to renew. We come here today for this SPES Graduation Mass, to thank God for all he has given us in the School of Mission this year. We are offering a Mass of the Angels. It's fascinating that at this very moment, this church is filled with myriads of electronic signals and radio waves we can't sense, but which we know are there. So too this church is filled with a myriad signals of another type: the work of the angels around God's throne, with the saints in glory and our departed loved ones. This too we can't sense but we know and believe. This supernatural world of God, heaven, the angels and saints always enfolds us sacramentally in our lives on earth, and in the Gospel of the Transfiguration we've just heard, Jesus momentarily pulls back the veil to enable his disciples to glimpse it and so to deepen their faith. But just as mobile phones are crucial today to human communications, so too the angels are crucial to God's communication with us. This is why it is wonderful for us to be here, to offer up Mass in their honour, asking them to deepen our friendship with God, to guard and protect us in our lives, and to keep us on the Way of Jesus.

When I was a university student in London in the late '70s, I once took a wrong turn on a visit to Foyle's Bookshop and suddenly came across this church. Entering from the street through the narthex, past the angels serving holy water, spying the saints on the altars, you move abruptly from one world to another, from earth to heaven. In today's secular culture, religion is ring-fenced and so life becomes horizontal, busy with the moment, all about shopping, work, entertainment. Yet without the sacred canopy of faith, ethics become groundless and right reason undermined. This in turn leads to a catastrophic diminution of what it means to be human, of human dignity and value, of love, freedom and happiness in a society that will drift inevitably towards a dictatorship of relativism. This is why as Catholics we have a humanitarian mission. Our world urgently needs to hear from us about the other world, about the full truth about being human, about being created, being fallen, yet in Christ being redeemed.

LORD, IT IS WONDERFUL FOR US TO BE HERE. The mission of SPES here in Soho is an answer to the Church's call for new evangelisation. Its task is to transfigure people's earthly lives with the heavenly, by introducing them to a personal-passionate relationship with Jesus Christ, above all in the Holy Eucharist. In today's culture, the greatest poverty is the lack of God. SPES seeks to remedy this by showing to others the love of Jesus, both to the spiritually poor and to the materially poor. For the Jesus we love in the Eucharist is the Jesus we love in the poor, and the Jesus we love in the poor is the Jesus we love in the Eucharist.

So in this Mass, let us ask God's blessing upon Alphonso, Ola and Ben that he will send his angels to guard them in the years ahead. We pray too for the work of SPES,

Fr. Alexander and this parish of St. Patrick's, that it will continue in the middle of Soho to be a Mount Tabor, a place of transfiguration, for those in need. And as we pray for ourselves, that we may be filled with the love of the Heart of Jesus, let us also pray for the conversion of England, for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, that all may come to find that true, genuine, lasting human happiness and fulfilment for which our hearts long and which Jesus alone can give.