

**SORROWFUL AND IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY: 150<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

HOW LOVELY IS YOUR DWELLING PLACE, LORD GOD OF HOSTS. Today we thank God for 150 years of this splendid church, founded by the Countess of Clare, Elizabeth Fitzgibbon, designed by Joseph Hanson and dedicated to the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary. The church today looks more beautiful than ever, a testimony to the great work of Fr. Glaysher and his parishioners. Our Diocese is proud of St. Mary's, but I think it's true to say, so too are the people of Ryde. Yet today also gives us an opportunity to thank God for all we've received in this holy place: the baptisms, confirmations and First HCs, the marriages and funerals, the parish priests and parishioners we've known and loved. Indeed, two of Fr. Glaysher's predecessors are also my own, Bishop Cahill and Bishop Cotter, who at various times served here as parish priest. So we thank the Lord today for this House of God and Gate of Heaven, in which in every Mass Jesus lays down his life for us, that we might receive the gift of eternal life and happiness.

YOU ARE GOD'S BUILDING said St. Paul in that 2ndR. A parish of course is not just its church, its stones, its plant, but its people, its living stones, its community, and the beauty of this place is meant in Christ to reflect the beauty of our lives, as God's People, as disciples of Jesus, as living temples of the Holy Spirit. This church is dedicated to the best loved Christian of all, Mary of Nazareth, who served God, all her life long with a pure and immaculate Heart, and who united her own offering to Christ's self-offering at the foot of the Cross. The consecration of a church is significant, because in some way you and I, the people of the parish, should reflect the truth of the saint under whose patronage we rejoice. In this, the Blessed Virgin presents the people of Ryde with a most sublime ideal and inspiration. Indeed, I wish to urge everyone in this parish if they don't already to make their own the Morning Offering: "O Jesus, through the most pure Heart of Mary, I offer you all the prayers, the works, the sufferings and joys of this day, for all the intentions of your Divine Heart in the Holy Mass."

In Portsmouth one of the things I like doing in the evening is to go out for a walk, saying the Rosary. I like the changing scene, but the lights of the city are so bright, you can rarely see the stars. Our secular culture is a bit like that: busy, bright, absorbing; it blocks out God and the sacred canopy of heaven, like fog obscuring our eternal destiny and making us lose our way. This is why the Church in our time calls us to the work of new evangelisation, to live more authentically the Gospel of Christ and to proclaim it more effectively. In this, the beauty of our churches and the beauty of the liturgies celebrated within them is crucial as a means of uniting human hearts with the Transcendent God for whom they long. So I urge you to visit this

church often, to come in here to pray to Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, to spend time in silence at his feet, learning from him the Way, the Truth and the Life.

GOD IS SPIRIT AND THOSE WHO WORSHIP MUST WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH. An anniversary is not just a time to look back but also a time to look forward. So in this Mass, in which we thank God and pray for the parish family, living and dead, whom we've known and loved here, let's also pray for all who belong to this community now, for the parish school, and for the next generations. Through the most pure Heart of Mary, may the Father pour out afresh the gifts of the Spirit that all may find in Jesus Christ the happiness for which they long