

T260515: Dedication of Our Lady and St. Wilfrid, Ventnor

DEDICATION OF A NEWLY REBUILT CHURCH

*This day is sacred to the Lord your God. Do not be mournful. Do not weep.* Catholicism arrived on this island with St. Wilfrid who landed in 687 to begin the work of evangelisation in Brading. In 1871 this parish opened but today, 7 years after a disastrous fire, we dedicate this beautiful new church, a holy house worthy of its purpose and one this community can rightly be proud of. In this Mass, we pray for those whose hard work and generosity have enabled this project, not least Fr. PJ Smith and all you parishioners. We remember Derek Hampshire the architect and Sarah Galloway who designed the windows. But not least we pray for the repose of all those who worshiped in the previous building and who surely have prayed for the resurrection of this church

*Lord, send your Spirit from heaven to make this church an ever-holy place and this altar a ready table for the sacrifice of Christ.* Today's Liturgy is rich in meaning. After invoking the help of the saints, with our own prayers rising up to heaven like incense, the church walls will be washed with holy water and the altar anointed with oil. Then, after Mass has been offered for the first time, the Blessed Sacrament will be installed in the Tabernacle to be the living heart of this edifice. These symbolic actions recall our baptism, confirmation and Communion. They remind us that you and I are the *living stones* of Christ's Church. *You are God's building* St. Paul said in that 2ndR. Just as Jesus dwells in this place, refreshing us with His sacraments, so too we must go from here to be 'Jesus' to those we meet. We must be His Good News. We must be His hands and feet. We must show His love to the needy. Moreover, a community should in some way incarnate its patron saint. This church is dedicated not only to the best-loved Saint of all, Our Lady, but also to St. Wilfrid the evangeliser, and so this community should be marked by its burning desire to spread the Gospel.

In this early 21C, with secularism in the ascendant, many people might wonder: Why are we opening a new church? After all, many today are indifferent to religion and many Catholics these days do not practice their faith. Research shews that people don't come to Mass because, they say, their spiritual needs are not being met here; they don't have a personal friendship with God, and they don't realise that Jesus calls them personally to be His disciple. This is why we have rebuilt this new church in Ventnor. We are responding to that deep need in the human person for happiness, for belonging, for immortality, for love, for union with God. So I want to ask you: Keep this beautiful church open! Don't lock Christ away! Don't prevent people coming to meet Him! Keep the church open so people can visit the Lord Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. Indeed, come yourselves often to pray here. And try to arrange times of Eucharistic Adoration. For as we adore Him, telling Him our needs, He renews us, sending us out refreshed.

*You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church and the gates of the underworld can never hold out against it.* Today, the mission of the Church in Ventnor and the Isle of Wight takes a huge leap forward. May this new church, this new tool, this new facility, greatly prosper the new evangelisation. May it be for all the *house of God* and the *gate of heaven*. Indeed, through the prayers of Our Lady and St. Wilfrid, may it help everyone develop a personal-passionate friendship with Christ, and thus find in Him that TGLHH&F for which they long.