

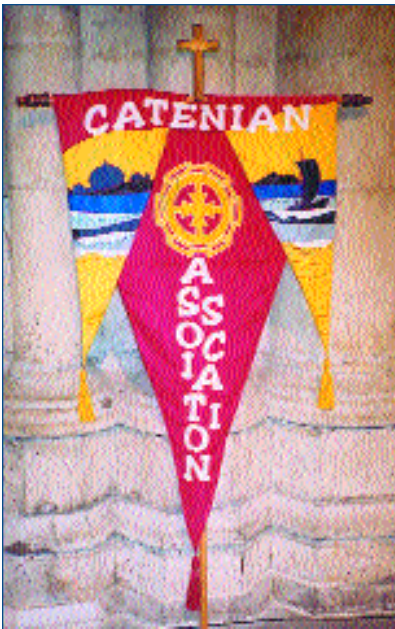


# York Minster Mass



• Members of Grand Council

## *Concelebrated Mass at York Minster - October 12, 2002*



**On Saturday October 12, the feast-day of St Wilfred of York, some 2,500 Catenians, wives and family members filled York Minster for a unique Mass.**

It is very rare for a Catholic service to be held in this second most important church in the United Kingdom of the Anglican faith.

A Concelebrated Mass both to mark the 400th Meeting of York Catenian Circle, and for the Catenian members of Provinces in Northern England and Scotland was held.

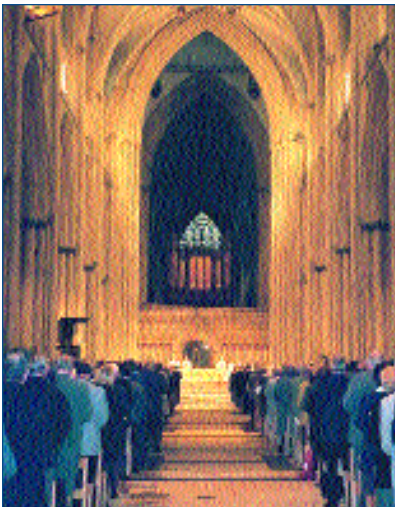
Whilst the Mass was timed to start at 11.00am, by 10.15am, people were streaming into the Minster and every seat was taken some twenty minutes before the service. Amongst the congregation was Grand Vice President of the Catenian Association, Gerald Soane, members of the Grand Council, The Dean and Chapter of York Minster, The Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of York and many distinguished local dignitaries.

A glittering procession, including 45 priests, 4 Bishops and 1 Archbishop, Knights of St Gregory and St Sylvester and many attendants entered the Nave as the Choir from All Saints Roman Catholic School, York led the congregation in the opening hymn. The rafters rang with much joyous singing, especially during the Gloria, sung to the tune of Cwm Rhondda.

In his Homily, the Celebrant, The Right Reverend John Crowley, Bishop of Middlesborough, wearing the Catenian vestments, referred to the special feast day of St Wilfred and how appropriate it was that on his day of remembrance, a close ecumenical service was being held in this great Minster. The collection raised over £3,000 which was divided between a donation to the Minster and Catenian Charities.

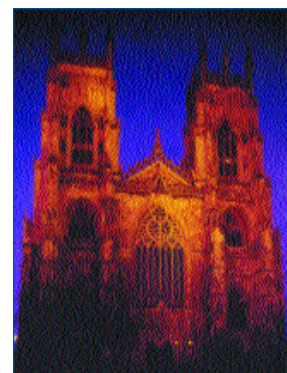
Many priests and Bishops went to different parts of the church to give communion and a personal blessing to those not partaking.

After the Mass, a celebratory formal lunch was held in St William's College for 200 persons, with another lunch being held for other brothers and wives.





## Bishop Crowley's Sermon



Today our Mass is here in York Minster. Let me not slip over that fact too quickly; not just the ready generosity of the Dean and Chapter, but the ecumenical significance of such a gesture. For this Minster, in particular, has over the years played a leading role in Christian unity initiatives. I think at this moment for example of its connections through the Halifax family with the Malines Conversations, that daring (at the time) encounter in the 1920s between our two Churches; a dialogue presided over by Lord Halifax and Cardinal Mercier of Malines - Brussels. In a quite unique way, therefore, we feel ourselves to be at home among friends in York Minster, cause enough in itself to make us pause, give thanks and rejoice about that road without exits marked the Reunion of Christendom.

It is worthy of note also that we are here, by chance it must be said, on the feast of St Wilfrid of York. He was the monk bishop who played a leading role in the synod of Whitby in 664. That great gathering held at the Monastery of St Hilda settled once and for all a bitter dispute which had torn the Church of his day. On the one hand there were the customs of the Romans - that part of the English Church which had flourished under the influence of Augustine's missionaries sent by Pope Gregory in the late 6th Century. But another important segment of the English Church had developed under the Celtic missionaries from Iona, headed by St Aidan in the 7th Century. It was St Wilfrid though who argued successfully for unity within the Roman tradition. That's why the synod of Whitby is historically so important, it set the compass for the whole future direction and discipline of Christianity in England. Wilfrid then was no stranger to the joys and hopes, the sorrows and anxieties of the search for Christian unity. He must surely be pleased that his feast day is being marked in this special manner.

And before leaving the rich theme of unity, let me express my personal delight that this gathering of the Catenian Association is a joint enterprise between the Northern Provinces and Scotland. The visible sign of that combined operation is here on the sanctuary in the welcome presence of several brother bishops from the Scottish hierarchy. It's another good reminder that York - not least geographically - tends towards unity, 200 miles from London, 200 miles from Glasgow!

But now - without further delay - I must

tell you the mythical story of the butcher. A highly successful member of the meat trade - a pillar of his local Catholic Church, came to die and found himself in due course in heaven's waiting room. He was at first delighted, but then disconcerted to find himself way down a queue which included ahead of him, some rather intermittent former attenders of his parish church down on earth. Our good butcher remonstrated with St Peter *"Why have I been kept waiting whilst these others, less than shining lights I have to say, are getting in ahead of me?"* *"Since you ask", said St Peter, "our heavenly reasoning is I think you'll find, fairly straight forward. You were indeed a better church attender than they, a notable figure in the Catholic world, but I have to say that you were never, as regards the welfare of your customers, a particularly good butcher!"*

The punch line is worth pursuing a little without labouring the point. Whether our trade is butcher or baker or candlestick maker, or solicitor or teacher, or in business or industry, that is the setting where our Christian witness delivers, or doesn't deliver. The energy for that witness, of course, will come in large part from the Sunday Mass in our parish church, will come from our personal lives of prayer, and will be helped along the way in your case by the mutual support of the Catenian Association. But the delivery point is essentially out there in the market place; in our standards of ethics, in the quality of our relationships with others built on a profound respect for each human person, and therefore not least in our manner of responding to the struggles, fallibilities and mistakes of others. The Lord's injunction **"Let him who is without sin cast the first stone"** could, if heeded, go a long way towards making our present day society less harshly judgmental for those caught in the cruel glare of public - and mostly pharasaical - opprobrium.

Looking around this large congregation brought together on this special day by our shared allegiance to the Lord Jesus, I find it very encouraging - and challenging - to ponder the force for good you can be in your professional lives. For out there in the world of work it is personal integrity above all else which will touch the lives of others at a deep level. Looking back more than 40 years to my own schooling, the teacher I remember most, and always with gratitude, was the one who genuinely cared for us, his unruly teenage charges.

He wasn't soft, he wasn't even the best teacher academically speaking, but what he did teach - triumphantly - was that each one of us was of great personal worth and that our frequent mistakes in the business of growing up could be accommodated and - more to the point - could with understanding become a learning curve towards the good. I don't know whether he was a Catenian - maybe not - but his brand of integrity rooted in his Christian faith was salt to my earth, and light to my young teenage world.

Dear members of the Catenian Association, one of the scripture readings you chose for this celebration sets out your life's agenda in forthright terms. **"You are a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people"**. But why all that? Why should we have been chosen as the beneficiaries of such overwhelming kindness? St Peter continues *[you are all these things - a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people]* **"in order that you might proclaim the mighty works of him who called you out of darkness into his own marvellous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy"**. May God bless you and your families and your Catenian Association. May your Association continue to support and challenge you day by day in your daily task at home and at work, of proclaiming **"the mighty works of Him who called you out of darkness into his own marvellous light"**.

