



National Centenary Mass at York Minster

On a bright, sunny Saturday in mid-October, nearly 2,500 Catenians and their families from all over the world; and from the north of Scotland down to Bournemouth – flocked to York Minster.

The occasion was a Mass to celebrate the centenary of the Catenian Association, by kind permission of the Dean and Chapter of the Minster. Arriving by the west door, the atmosphere was palpable as the congregation arrived in this iconic, vast and beautiful centre of Christianity since the Middle Ages. A hushed calm belied the excitement that so many felt that day. It is indeed an exciting and awe inspiring building today that speaks of the faith of those who built it – what must it have said to congregations in those Middle Ages?

Soon the nave, and north and south transepts were packed as at 10.55am the Dean of York, the Very Rev Keith Jones warmly welcomed his Catholic guests to the Minster, describing some of the symbols of ecumenism that would be used during the Mass, including the processional Minster Cross, the Mercier Chalice and the Catherine of Braganza Crosier for the principal celebrant.

At 11am precisely a bell sounded and the procession wound round the huge building, taking some five minutes to reach the altar. It was led by the thurifer, the Minster Cross bearer and acolytes, followed by Catenian Knights of St Sylvester, Knights of St Gregory and Knights of the Holy Sepulchre, all in their uniforms and full regalia. The procession, in order, included the verger and deacon of the Gospel, priests of the Middlesborough Diocese, the Rt Rev John Rawsthorne, Bishop of Hallam; the Rt Rev Arthur Roche, Bishop of Leeds; the Prior of Ampleforth, the Very Rev Colin Battell; the Most Rev Mario Conti, Archbishop of Glasgow; His Eminence Keith Patrick, Cardinal O'Brien, Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh; the Rt Rev Terence Draine, Bishop of Middlesborough as principal celebrant and finally the Dean and Chapter of York.

The magnificent choir, facing the congregation, struck up with "Praise to the Holiest in the Height", under the directorship of Anji Dowson, accompanied by York Minster's Assistant Director of Music David Pipe on the organ. Music during the Mass included the traditional Latin Credo and a beautiful post-Communion motet "O Lord you sit enthroned" (music by Anji Dowson,



Principal Guests at York Gala Dinner (l to r): Grand Secretary Jim & Ann Quinn; President Province 3S, David & Sandra Brinkley; President York Circle, Victor & Mary Nicholls; Grand Vice President Joe & Philomena McNally; His Grace Cardinal Keith Patrick O'Brien; Grand President David & Kathleen Taylor; Archbishop of Glasgow Mario Conti; Mrs Viola Jones; Sheriff of York David Wilde; Mrs Annabel Wilde; Fr John Murphy; Dean of York Very Rev Keith Jones; President Province 3N, Gerard & Jane McShera

dedicated to her godfather Dick Last, the 50th Grand President of the Catenian Association). The 2500 Catenians and their families were also in fine voice.

As the sun streamed through the famous Rose Window of the Minster and incense ascended to fill the huge central tower, few were in doubt that we were present at a very special event indeed.

Bishop Terence Draine preached, thanking the Dean and Chapter for permission to hold the Mass and for their welcome and presence with the congregation. He praised the ideals of the Catenians, challenging the congregation to live up to them in full and recalling the spirit of the men who set up the "Chums" in Manchester a century ago.

The closing procession mirrored the opening, this time processing down the north aisle rather than the south aisle, to the strains of "Thine be the Glory", through to the Minster Choir stalls behind the main altar.

Most seemed reluctant to leave, lingering amid the charms of this most special of buildings, walking around and viewing its delights, perhaps savouring the atmosphere of a fitting tribute to 100 years of the Catenians. From the striking and moving modern sculpture of Mother Teresa of Calcutta in the prayer chapel at the east end of the Minster to its many medieval delights, it is still this extraordinary building itself that thrills the most. We felt privileged to have heard Mass there.

In the end, 130 circles came from around the world, representing virtually all Catenian provinces. Most notable perhaps was John Secker, Director of Province 21, from Sydney, Australia, who

travelled quite literally half way round the world to be part of the event. In excess of £6,500 was collected for Minster and Catenian charities.

A great start to a great day continued with most of the congregation splitting up into smaller groups for both formal and informal lunches together around the city, many coming together again in the evening for the Centenary Gala Dinner. Moving from an ancient iconic building in York to a brand new one, the new stand and Conference Centre at York Racecourse on the Knavesmire, Master of Ceremonies Peter Dowson, resplendent in his scarlet suit, introduced the speakers. After the Loyal Toast, proposed by David Brinkley, President of Province 3 (S), York President Victor Nicholls proposed a toast to the city of York, outlining many of the city's attractions and historical significance. The Sheriff of York, Honorary Alderman David Wilde, responded with more tales of the city. Joe McNally, Grand Vice President and Director of Province 3 proposed a toast to the guests.

The response and keynote speech came from Cardinal Keith Patrick O'Brien who toasted the Catenian Association. Outlining many of the fine traditions of the Association, he especially praised the Catenian challenge to be "PC" – not politically correct but "Proudly Catholic"! The Cardinal went on to explore a subject dear to his heart, the philosophy behind the Pro-Life traditions of the Church and our need to defend them.

Finally, Grand President David Taylor responded on behalf of the Association, thanking the Cardinal, other speakers and guests.

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