

Stewardship Sunday 2/4 – Theme: Service

Address by Fr Bill Wilson at the Solemn Eucharist

It is good to be here.

It is good to be inside these ancient walls and to be part of the action that first gave this building its reason for being.

This place brings us into touch with our roots, connects us with nearly a millennium of Christian history.

Our ancestors here would recognise what we do here Sunday by Sunday, because we celebrate the same sacraments, recite the same creed, belong to the same universal Church.

We, like them, are called to love and serve God.

That is the first call on our time, our resources, for the Church is the primary community we belong to, where all are welcome, and where barriers are broken down, sins forgiven, lives made whole.

God first loved us and in his great generosity came to live among us as one of us.

So everything that this great place has been and still is has to do with the worship of almighty God, the source of our life, the aim and goal of our existence.

Our destination.

It deserves to survive, not as a valuable antique, handed on to the next generation to treasure and preserve intact, but because it is the home of a community that seeks to serve God, who has called us.

The weight, the pull of history, is strong, but in the end this place is not a safe house down memory lane, but our home, where we meet face to face with the living God.

So this house is vital to our common life, and we have little excuse for failing to recognise and applaud its role in history and today in this world city.

We can easily be plagued with sentimentality, so we need to remember that the Eucharist is not high tea, but an encounter with the reason why we are Christians at all – a making present of the reality of our standing with our Creator, which was achieved by the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, whose body we are.

So our first call is to serve God.

Our second call springs from this – from our perception of the value God places on every human creature.

It is to build community.

To build with the worshipping community a setting where human warmth radiates within this place and spreads to all those we encounter both here on Sundays and in the rest of our daily lives.

We not only encounter God here; we encounter each other.

This is why the opportunities we have for building friendship and relationships should always be seized.

Put simply, the gathering that takes place in the cloister café after the Solemn Eucharist is a vital consequence of the worship we have just been part of.

We are companions – sharers in one bread – so we should be friends.

A place like this, which attracts tourists and other visitors, should also seize the possibility of encounter with them to extend the influence of our communal life.

Many of those we meet will only be here once in a lifetime, but the experience of the presence of God and of the warmth of human fellowship will remain with them.

And we may never know.

These two poles of our life here – the service of God and the building of community, and crucial to our mission.

In a changing and often dangerous world we can in the end only rest in confidence as members of the Church if we turn to our eternal Lover who is our ultimate, abiding security.