

Menevia receives its new Bishop

The Cathedral of St Joseph in Swansea was filled with people from across the Diocese of Menevia on 23rd June 2022 for the Mass of Installation for the new Bishop of Menevia, the Rt Rev Mark O’Toole.

His Grace, Archbishop O’Toole, has been appointed by Pope Francis to be Bishop both of the Archdiocese of Cardiff and of the Diocese of Menevia and his Installation in Cardiff took place a few days earlier on 20th June.

Having knelt in silent prayer at the doors of the Cathedral, the new Bishop kissed the Crucifix handed to him by the Provost of the Chapter of Canons, and sprinkled the congregation with Holy Water. Archbishop Mark then made his way to the altar where Archbishop George Stack, the Apostolic Administrator of Menevia, prayed for the new bishop and installed him in the Bishop’s *Cathedra*. Archbishop Mark was then given the crozier, or shepherd’s staff, whilst Archbishop George prayed, “May the Lord sustain you as you watch over all the flock of this Diocese, to which the Holy Spirit has assigned you as Bishop, to serve this Church of God.

Gyda chariad Duw yn fy nghalon - With the love of God in my heart

Archbishop Mark then accepted his new ministry, “with faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the love of God in my heart.” The love of God was a theme that Archbishop Mark returned to repeatedly throughout the Mass.

In his homily, His Grace referred to the love of God as a way of understanding what God was doing through his appointment as Bishop of both the dioceses of Cardiff and of Menevia. The Archbishop emphasised that central to the future of both dioceses is not “the next pastoral plan or project” but the central place occupied in the lives of each one of us by Jesus Christ.

Archbishop Mark shared with the congregation that “God has exercised a magnetic pull over my heart since the age of 17.” This beckoning love of Jesus, the Beloved, draws each of us towards Him in discipleship and in intimate relationship.

The impact of the event of Jesus Christ in our lives

There is no point, the Archbishop reflected, in uniting the two dioceses together *in persona Episcopi* (in the person of the Bishop), “if it has no real impact on how we each respond to the Lord’s love, and try to help others discover and love Him, too.”

This sentiment was echoed by Bishop Edwin Regan, retired Bishop of Menevia, who spoke at the end of Mass. Bishop Regan suggested that the wrong question to be asking a new Bishop is, “What are you going to do about our situation?” Instead, we should each be asking ourselves, “How am I going to respond to this new opportunity?”

The Installation Mass was celebrated on the Solemnity of the Birth of St John the Baptist. Archbishop Mark referred to the passage in the day’s Gospel in which the question was asked regarding John the Baptist, “What will this child turn out to be?”

His Grace noted that this question is asked by all parents about their own children and stated that it had also been asked by his own parents about him. The Archbishop’s Mother and other family members were present at the Masses in Menevia and Cardiff to show their affection and support as Archbishop Mark was installed in his new roles.

Many children and young people from schools across the Diocese were also present at the Mass. To them, the new Archbishop said that the same question is asked, “What will this child or young person turn out to be?”

John the Baptist pointed the way to Jesus, and through John's witness the lives of the Apostles were changed forever as they encountered Jesus for themselves. So too, John points out for us, "There is the Lamb of God", so that we too may be changed by our own encounter with the Lord.

Gwnewch y pethau bychain – Do the little things

Addressing the Cathedral in Welsh, Archbishop O'Toole took as his own the words of St David, "Do the little things! Be joyful and keep the Faith." This sentiment was echoed in the Archbishop's warm words to the civic, ecumenical and interfaith partners who were present at the Mass: "We want to work together, even in little or small ways, to build up places of sanctuary in our churches and in our communities."

The Archbishop told the congregation that 'Croeso' had been the word he had heard most often since he arrived Wales. "The generous spirit of Wales, which has deep spiritual roots, is expressed in this word, 'Welcome'". Archbishop Mark expressed his desire that, following the example of St David and the many Celtic saints, we might continue to work so that our communities become places of sanctuary.

Archbishop Mark expressed sincere thanks to Archbishop George as well as to the former Bishops of Menevia also present. The Archbishop also thanked his "brother priests" for their fidelity, and assured them that "your priestly life is a priority for me."

His Grace also thanked all the Religious and lay faithful of the Diocese, as well as the seminarians. He particularly expressed his prayers and good wishes to Greg Beckett who is soon to be ordained a Deacon on his path to ordination as a Priest for the diocese.

The Archbishop wished for all of us to reflect personally on how we might realise that Jesus is the most important event in our lives, and that he wants an intimate and deep friendship with us; and to ask ourselves how we might be filled once more with enthusiasm and energy for Him?

Having begun the Mass of Installation by lighting the candle in the hand of Our Lady of the Taper, Archbishop O'Toole commended the life and mission of all in the diocese to her care, "May she indeed light the path ahead and lead us to her Son."