

ADDRESS TO POLISH COMMUNITY IN ARCHDIOCESE OF ST ANDREWS AND EDINBURGH

CARDINAL KEITH PATRICK O'BRIEN

SUNDAY 26TH AUGUST 2007

ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL, EDINBURGH

1.15 pm and 5.45 pm MASSES

INTRODUCTION:

It is indeed a privilege to be able to address so many of our Polish friends at these two Masses in St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh on this the feast of Our Lady of Czestochowa. It is indeed a joy to see so many people from Poland wishing to attend Sunday Mass and setting a wonderful example to both Scottish people and their fellow Polish people.

At this time, I thank my own advisors especially Monsignor Philip Kerr who recently travelled to Poland visiting Polish Bishops on my behalf and Monsignor David Gemmell, the Administrator of our Cathedral who along with his assistant priest, Father Hugh Purcell has gone to considerable trouble to accommodate approximately 2,000 additional Polish worshippers at the two Sunday Masses here in our Cathedral. I thank others, especially Father Tadeusz Puton and representatives from the Polish Community for assisting me in my decision making at this present time.

Obviously when discussing a situation such as we have in this Archdiocese as in other parts of Scotland the needs of our **people** must come first. To adequately cater for our people we do need **priests**. And thirdly for somewhere suitable in which to worship we need **buildings**. I address these three points in turn.

PEOPLE:

As everyone knows there has been a vast increase in the community of Polish people within Scotland in recent years. Some say the increase is perhaps by 2,000% and a figure given to me is that of about 40,000 Polish people in Edinburgh alone. This increase is happily reflected in attendance at the Polish Masses – but sadly perhaps because of lack of knowledge where churches are or where there are Polish speaking priests many are not finding their way to Sunday Mass.

While it is relatively easy for people residing within the City of Edinburgh to come to one of these usually packed Masses on a Sunday it is not so easy for people outwith the City to attend Polish Mass at this present time – and I have taken steps to ensure that all areas in our Archdiocese will be covered through the assistance of a Polish priest.

PRIESTS:

First of all I am very grateful to the priests who have worked with what is described as the “Polish Mission to Scotland” since the Second World War.

At the present time Father Tadeusz Puton has and is accomplishing very great work here in Edinburgh while Father Michal Olszewski from the Diocese of Siedlce continues his apostolate with the Polish Mission while assisting at St Francis Xavier's, Falkirk.

Secondly I am very grateful to the Pallotine Fathers (SAC) who from earlier contacts with myself allowed Father George Suszko to undertake pastoral work in our Archdiocese some 10 years ago and who is at present parish priest in the parishes of St Andrew's, Livingston and St Philip's, Livingston. Father George has helped a number of Pallotine Fathers settle into ministry in Scotland while also caring for the needs of the Polish people especially in the West Lothian area of our Archdiocese. Father Chris Biernat S.A.C. will move as assistant priest from Livingston to assistant priest at SS John Cantius and Nicholas, Broxburn. Father Martin Motyka S.A.C. will come from Poland to be assistant priest at St Andrew's, Livingston and St Philip's, Livingston.

Thirdly I now thank the three Polish Bishops who have released one Polish priest each to minister in our parishes in this Archdiocese while assisting in the pastoral care of Polish people.

These priests are: Father Andrzej Jablonski from the Diocese of Toruń who will be assistant priest at St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh; Father Zbigniew Porzeziński from the Archdiocese of Warsaw who will be assistant priest at St Catherine's, Gracemount; and Father Andrzej Szulczynski from the Archdiocese of Gniezno who will be assistant Priest at St Pius X at Kirkcaldy while residing in St Ninian's, Bowhill.

Consequently from the beginning of October there will now be Sunday Masses celebrated in the Polish language as follows:

City of Edinburgh

9.00 am	St Catherine's Gracemount
9.30 am	St Margaret Mary's, Granton
12 noon	St Ninian's, Restalrig
1.15 pm	St Mary's Cathedral
5.45 pm	St Mary's Cathedral

West Lothian:

Broxburn

5.30 pm	Ss John Cantius and Nicholas, Broxburn
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Livingston

7.00 pm	St Andrew's Livingston
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Central Region:

Falkirk

1.15 pm	St Francis Xavier's, Falkirk
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Stirling

9.30 am	St Mary's, Stirling (Second and last Sunday of the month)
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Fife**Kirkcaldy**

9.30 am St Marie's, Kirkcaldy

Borders**Galashiels**

9.30 am Our Lady and St Andrews, Galashiels (Fourth Sunday of the month)

It is hoped that you, your family and your friends can attend Mass near you locally so that we can properly assess the needs of our Polish Community. In particular over the next few weeks a census is being taken up here in the Cathedral to discover just where you live in Edinburgh – if there are many living near other churches Mass will be celebrated there if at all possible. Provision of Mass in Polish will of course be kept under review – perhaps venues and times will be changed if appropriate. It is hope that the 1.15 pm Mass in St Mary's Cathedral on Sunday will soon no longer be necessary because of the provision of Masses elsewhere in the City of Edinburgh.

Obviously, if there is need, daily Mass will be celebrated in the Polish language at some of the above churches – particularly at St Ninian's where the need will soon be assessed.

PROPERTY:

Our Church is 'people' not 'buildings'. Consequently I have spoken to you first of all of people, priests, and Masses.

However buildings are indeed necessary. Over my 22 years as Archbishop I have joined the Polish Community and the Italian Community at various celebrations in St Anne's Oratory – as well as of course joining the Ukrainian Community in the churches where they celebrated their liturgies before acquiring the Ukrainian Church in Dalmeny Street.

The Italian Community no longer use St Anne's Oratory. Approximately one year ago the building of the Oratory was found to be in need of major repair and the decision was made by our Cathedral Parish to sell the Oratory building to the Trustees of the Archdiocese, particularly as it was seen to have outgrown the use of the Polish Community and was no longer used by the Cathedral Parish who owned the property. Consequently, the Trustees decided to lease the property.

Knowing of the desire of the Polish Community to have, as it were, their 'own church' with particular liturgical symbols and works of art, I am designating St Ninian's Church, the nearest church to the Cathedral, to be used as the Polish Community Church in Edinburgh as well as continuing to be used by the local Catholic Community.

With the agreement of the parishioners of St Ninian's Polish Symbols etc maybe transferred to that particular church and I am sure that it will become a special place of prayer for you all.

CONCLUSION:

I thank you all for the attention which you have given to me at this time. Be assured that the contents of what I have said will be distributed to our Polish parishioners, both in English and in Polish.

Over the next few weeks a census will be taken up in our Cathedral to discover where the congregation at the masses in our Cathedral live in Edinburgh. If there are many living near other churches where Polish Mass is being celebrated I urge you to attend these churches. If there is no Polish Mass being celebrated in the particular area where there are many resident Polish people then Mass will be celebrated there also if at all possible. And, of course, the need for so many Masses in Polish will gradually diminish as more of you and your children become more and more fluent in the English language – and play a greater part in the Catholic life of our parishes and the civic life of our community.

The provision of Mass in Polish and the times of these Masses will be kept under review – and perhaps venues and times will be changed if appropriate. I would hope that there would be at least the 5.45 pm in Polish celebrated in our Cathedral.

The coming of so many Polish people to Scotland could indeed then be the means of a new evangelisation, a new spreading of the Gospel for us all. Be proud of the Catholic Christian faith which you have and which you have carried to the ends of the earth. At this present time it is important for all Catholics to both value their faith and hand it on whatever ethnic background we come from. We are aware so often that we are living in a secular society – there is a need of a greater and more effective living of our Christianity. As Pope John Paul II who came to this country for a few days 25 years ago in 1982 had a tremendous influence both by word and example so it is my prayer that that same influence be shown by you all here in Scotland by the way you live and by the way you speak of your faith.

May God indeed bless you all and help you feel more and more at home in this beloved country of Scotland; and may Our Lady of Czestochowa care for all in your own beloved homeland and those living far from it.