

Welcome by Fr. Pat Courtney, MSC Provincial

On behalf of the Irish Province of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart it is indeed a wonderful honour and privilege for me to welcome you all to Cork today to join with us in celebrating this milestone in our history – the centenary of our first foundation in Ireland which began in this city at the Western Road in Cork in 1909.

I wish to acknowledge with profound gratitude the presence here with us of the following: the city Lord Mayor and the Lady Mayoress, who earlier in the year honoured our centenary with a reception in the City Hall; Commandant Michael Treacy, representing the Taoiseach; His Excellency Most Rev. Archbishop Giuseppe Leanza, Papal Nuncio; Bishop John Buckley, Bishop of Cork and Ross; Fr. Narciso Abellana, assistant general of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, representing our Superior General

I warmly welcome all Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, representatives of the different areas of our Province and missionary territories where we serve or have served in the past, in such places as South Africa, Venezuela, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, Texas, Russia, Great Britain and of course Ireland. Also representatives of European Provinces and beyond who are with us: Fr. Tim Brennan from Australia, Fr. Tito Maratas from the Phillipines, Fr. Ben Verberne from the Netherlands, Fr. Desbois from France, Fr. Hans Lamers from Germany and Fr. Michael Huber and Bro. Christian Lucia from the Austrian and South German Province.

I welcome the representatives of our sister Congregation, the Daughters of Our lady of the Sacred Heart, as well as those sisters who have collaborated with us in Ministry both at home and overseas; representatives of the religious Congregations and the diocesan clergy, from whom we experience great friendship, support and encouragement in our mission.

To each and every one of you I extend a Cead Mile failte – a hundred thousand welcomes.

As we assemble here today in Cork city we do so following in the footsteps of a great visionary and an intrepid missionary who pioneered our presence in Ireland, namely Fr. Michael Tierney who hailed from Churchtown in North Cork. (I refer you to the introduction in the Mass booklet for more detailed information on him.) From the sowing of that seed at the Western Road a very powerful missionary tradition was born, grew and flourished over the years, a beautiful reality came to life, of which we can feel justifiably proud.

Many Missionaries of the Sacred Heart since then went overseas to countries such as; New Guinea, South Africa, Indonesia, the Southern States of the USA, Great Britain and more recently to Russia. In a spirit of heroic self-sacrifice and admirable generosity they dedicated their lives to the service of the Gospel and to meeting the needs of God's people. This meant a deep love for and solidarity with the poor and the marginalised, very often responding to basic humanitarian needs.

This is truly a great day for us. We recall our story, our beginning as a religious community/ congregation here in this city in 1909 and indeed we recall the many journeys of outreach

beyond our shores undertaken by the members of our religious family since then, in response to our mission to proclaim the good news of God's love for all peoples. We give thanks to God for what has been achieved; we embrace the present with insight, courage, passion and a listening heart to God's Spirit and to the needs of our times as we move into uncharted waters for the future, empowered with faith, hope and love.

We are both humbled and encouraged by the following words of the late Pontiff, Pope John Paul II, to us on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of our Congregation in 2004. "It is my fervent hope that you my dear brothers will continue to draw inspiration and strength from your "spirituality of the heart" and from your Founder's charism as you fulfil your vocation in the Church and the world. You have not only a glorious history to remember and recount, but also a great history still to be accomplished! Look to the future, where the Spirit is sending you in order to do even greater things."

We give thanks for our achievements. In this I am profoundly aware that these are not of our own sole making but are the outcome of the support, generosity and collaboration of thousands of people from this city, from the length and breadth of our country and from beyond our shores, our benefactors who accompany and journey with us in prayer and funding. I wish today to publicly acknowledge this support of so many people who believe in our vision, our values, our convictions, our mission and who want to be part of our life and work.

We have been in the past and continue to be in the present blessed with such people. We the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart feel very humbled and immensely indebted to all such people. Without them I can honestly say we would not have been able to carry out our mission either at home or abroad as we strive to be faithful to the mission given to us by our Founder Fr. Chevalier "to make the Sacred Heart of Jesus everywhere known and loved".

This of course we realise, entails personally believing in and witnessing to that love in our own lives and enabling others to be touched, enriched and transformed by that same love in the many diverse and challenging situations of daily life. Today more than ever humanity needs to drink from the well of salvation or put in another way drink from the well and culture of love. We believe that our mission remains as relevant today as it was one hundred years ago. With this conviction we embrace the future.