

RESPONSE TO THE LORD MAYOR'S WELCOME

A Ard Mhéara,

Ar mo shon féin agus ar son an ghrúpa atá cruinnithe anseo um thráthnóna, ba mhaith liom mo bhuíochas a ghabháil leat don Fháilte Uí Cheallaigh a chuir tú roimh Misinéirí an Chroí Naofa ar an ócáid stairiúil seo dúinn – céad bliain i ndiaidh bunú an chéad tí againne in Éirinn.

Tharla sé san chathair seo i míle naoi gcéad is a naoi ag Bóther an Iarthair.

Táim fíor bhuíoch don chuireadh seo do Halla na Cathrach an tráthnóna seo.

On my own behalf and on behalf of our assembled group here this evening I wish to thank you for your very warm welcome to the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart on the occasion of the centenary of our foundation in Ireland, which took place in this city at the Western Road in 1909. I am deeply grateful for your kind invitation to the City Hall this evening.

I appreciate very much your words of welcome and your very complimentary remarks about the positive interaction between the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart and the people of Cork from the beginning. I have noted your listing of our contributions to the life of the city and county through our involvement in the spiritual nourishment and development of people in the educational, cultural and sporting life of Cork. Yes, from the beginning there was a deep bond between the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart and the local community of the city.

From the outset we immersed ourselves in the social life of the city. In terms of Gaelic games many of our members over the years played and promoted them. At club level some of our students while studying at the Sacred Heart College, Western Road, or later at Carraig na bhFear, were head hunted and encouraged to play for local clubs in the city. It did not take a whole lot of persuasion in most cases. A few of our men wore the red and white jersey of the rebel county both in hurling and football with distinction. One member, a Kerryman, played no small part in Cork's defeat of his native county. One of our members was selected to train and coach the Cork minor footballers for a number years and did so with great success. Some of our members became deeply involved in the cultural and educational life of the city and beyond the city in the county, giving particular attention to the promotion of the Irish language and cúrsaí dramaíochta as Gaeilge.

From my personal conversations with some of our older priests, many of whom have long passed on to their eternal reward, I am deeply conscious of the wonderful rapport between them and the people of Cork. I am mindful and deeply grateful for the support offered to us down through the years by the citizens of this city in both public and private life. Without this

our achievements at home and overseas would not have been possible. I wish to acknowledge publicly this support and assistance here this evening. From that initial planting of the seed in the Western Road in 1909, a very powerful missionary tradition grew and expanded. Many Missionaries of the Sacred Heart since then went overseas to such countries as Great Britain, New Guinea, South Africa, Venezuela, and Indonesia and more recently to Russia. In a spirit of heroic self-sacrifice and generosity they dedicated their lives to the service of Christ and God's people. In many instances this entailed responding to the basic humanitarian needs of the very poor and the marginalised, always having a sense of solidarity with them in their struggles.

It is many years ago since I first came across John Donne's statement, "No man is an island". This is also very true of a missionary congregation. Our achievements are not solely of our own making, but are the outcome of the support and generosity of the people who journey with us, of people who believe in our values, our convictions, our spirit, our mission and who want to embrace them with us. The people of Cork have been, and still are today, such people.

Ba mhaith liom mo buíochas a gabháil do na dea-dhaoine sin uile.

It is my pleasure to present you with you with a copy of a very well researched history of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in Great Britain and Ireland from 1877 to 1940 entitled *Late, But Not Too Late*, written by Dr Henry Twohig, a Missionary of the Sacred Heart who hails from Castlemagner, Mallow, Co. Cork.

Rev Patrick Courtney MSC

Provincial Superior,

Irish Province of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart