

*Homily of Fr. Robert Young, Parish Priest of Kinsale
at the Episcopal Ordination of Fr Fintan Gavin,
Bishop-elect of the Diocese of Cork and Ross
Cathedral of St. Mary and St. Anne, Cork
Sunday June 30th, 2019 at 3pm.*



THE CALL OF GOD

Readings Micah 6:6a,8
Psalm 40 Here I am Lord, I come to do your will
1Cor12:12-14
Matthew 28:16-20

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

It will be 200 years next year, 2020, since John England, a priest of the Diocese of Cork, a native of this parish, was appointed Bishop of Charleston, South Carolina in the United States. He studied for the priesthood in St. Patrick's College, Carlow, was ordained a priest in this Cathedral in 1808 – the same year that the Cathedral was dedicated.

He served here in the Cathedral Parish as Chaplain to North Presentation Convent for nine years. In that time, he was also a lecturer in the seminary that functioned across the road from the Cathedral. He established a library in this area of the city and began publishing a Catholic monthly. He took on the trusteeship of a local newspaper and was its most forthright columnist.

John England lived in one of the most troubled times in Irish History. As the repeal of the Penal Laws took effect, the future place of Catholicism in Irish Society was being worked out. The big issue was the proposal of a veto by the English Monarchy on the appointments of Irish Bishops in exchange for funding of The National Seminary at Maynooth. The Monarchy did not want priests, trained in the France of the French Revolution, coming back to Ireland. John England, a typical Cork Rebel, was a fiery opponent of the veto which threatened disaster for the Irish Church. He campaigned along with Daniel O'Connell for what culminated in Catholic Emancipation. On the 21st September 1820 he was consecrated Bishop here in Cork.

While Bishop of his new Diocese he continued to use print media in his Ministry. He was editor of the first Catholic publication in the United States sowing the seeds for the American Catholic press. He was the first Catholic priest to speak in the American House of Representatives. He made a contribution to the Church-State relations in the American constitution, advocating freedom of religion and total separation of Church and state.

John England was a firm believer in the value of respectful conversation with the culture of the day in which he was tasked to build a diocese, even if the culture was adversarial at times. But he never shied away from the truth, always seeking out opportunities to spread the Gospel.

John England answered the call of God. He took on a difficult and challenging mission to go to another country and set up a new diocese in difficult times.

Many people down through the centuries have answered the call of God. It is inspiring to hear their story and come to see what God does through them. We think of the Christian Brothers, their founder Edmund Rice who started their first school in Cork near what is now the Basement of this Cathedral. Nano Nagle started her school and community only a stone's throw away from here. There are so many others. Every Parish in the country has the story of women and men who have answered God's call. That is why we have devotion to the Saints. The work of Brother Kevin Crowley, Fr. Peter McVerry, Sr. Stan and Sr. Concilio and others inspire us today. In fact, every one of us here has our own faith story of trying to respond to God's call.

Today is a very special and historic day for our diocese. What is happening today has happened only eight times in the last 200 years. Today we thank God for the Ministry of Bishop John Buckley. Bishop John, you have served faithfully as Bishop for 35 years, 13 as Auxiliary and 22 as Ordinary. It has been a difficult and challenging time. We wish you well as you enter a new phase of your life.

I warmly welcome Bishop-elect Fintan Gavin. The priests and people of the diocese are delighted that you accepted the call to be our Bishop. I would like our welcome to be Christlike, not calculating or overpowering. I believe you are coming to us in The Lord's name as reflected in the Scripture Readings you have chosen for this Mass. Yours is a daunting task, like that of John England.

I was visiting the First Communion class in the parish where I work when I got my first phone call from you. Normally I would not answer the phone when in a classroom, but I was expecting another call that I needed to take so I excused myself from the children, stepped outside the classroom, and when I discovered it was you, I was delighted to welcome you to Cork. Then you asked me if I would preach the homily today. My reaction was in shock to say "*Oh Jesus, Mary and St. Joseph*", knowing that there are

others a lot more capable. I said I would think about and pray about it. Then when I thought about it, what struck me was that, my first conversation with our new Bishop had me taking the Lord's name in vain! But then I thought further, no, that was the Spirit invoking in me, the prayer of Holy Family, and that there was no need for a flight into Egypt!

So, Bishop-elect Fintan, I am delighted to welcome you to Cork, I welcome your family – your parents Michael and Angela, your brothers and sisters, nephews, nieces and extended family. Michael and Angela, thank you for supporting two of your sons to be priests in our Church, our Bishop elect Fintan and Fr. Morgan.

What is the Lord saying to us today as we gather here for this historic occasion? What is the Lord saying to us in the Scriptures?

What stands out for me as I read and pray the Readings:

- a) The words of the Psalm 'Waiting for the Lord, He hears our cry and puts a new song in our hearts' It is the Lord's message that we really need!! The Lord's message is always Good News "They who wait on God renew their strength, they put out wings like eagles," say Isaiah (40:31)
- b) In the Gospel we see the end of one era and the beginning of another. Jesus comes to the end of one era when He was physically present to his followers: a new era is about to begin at Pentecost. From then on Jesus will be present in His Body of Believers. He continues His Ministry to heal, to comfort, to forgive, to include, to teach and to guide through us. We his followers, will not be left on our own. He will give us His Spirit to be Christ's Body on earth.
- c) Also in the Gospel, The eleven disciples set out for Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had arranged to meet them. When they saw the Lord they fell down before Him, "though some hesitated"; though some hesitated. We can identify with this. Why do we hesitate? We hesitate because we are tired, we are a wounded Church, a Church that has been shamed, a Church that has lost credibility to many, a Church with an aging and diminished number of religious and priests. A Church that is in the winter season. To this Church Jesus speaks as he spoke to the eleven telling us that it is His Church, that He will be with us and that with him there is always a new Spring, a new beginning.
- d) St Paul draws a picture of the unity that should exist in the Church if it is to fulfil its proper function as The Body of Christ. A body is healthy and efficient only when each part is functioning well. The parts of the body are not jealous of each other and do not covet each other's functions. From Paul's picture we see how we need each other and how we are to treat each other.
- e) In the Body there is no such thing as relative importance. If any limb or any organ ceases to function the whole body is thrown out of gear. All service ranks the same to God. This is very relevant for us as we try to move from a clerical hierarchical Church to being the Church as 'The People of God', Christ's Body.
- f) The Prophet Micah, sums up perfectly, the values of those who try to respond to God's call: Act justly, love tenderly, walk humbly with your God.

Lord, strengthen our faith. Teach us how to wait for you. Give us a faith that will seek your guidance. Help us to discern our heart's desire. We will be your Body on earth when we hear your call and respond to it by using our talents, when we all work together, women and men, building up the faith community in every parish. As the

beautiful stained glass window over the organ gallery inspires: Lord, pour out your Holy Spirit now on our Bishop-elect Fintan as he answers your call to be the Shepherd of the flock of Cork and Ross.

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