

**Sacred Military Constantinian Order of St George**  
**Delegation of Great Britain and Ireland**  
**University Church, St. Stephen's Green, Dublin 2.**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> October 2014.**

**Homily by**  
**The Most Rev Dr Raymond Field, KCGCO, KC\*HS, KM**

**Your Excellency, Knights and Dames of the Sacred Military Constantinian Order of St. George, from Great Britain & Ireland, esteemed spouses and distinguished guests.**

I welcome you to our celebration of the Eucharist this evening in the Church built by Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman, celebrating the Eucharist with his chalice, on this, the First Friday of the Month and also the feast day of a great Dublin Priest who became Abbot of the Benedictine Community in Maredsous, Belgium, and was beatified - Blessed Dom Columba Marmion.

He was born in Smithfield, baptized in Arran Quay Church, and after Ordination to priesthood, served as a teacher in Clonliffe College, appointed as curate in Dundrum Parish, joined the Benedictines in Maredsous, Belgium, became Abbot there and is renowned for his lectures and writings on the spiritual life - which formed many

seminarians (including myself) and read by Popes. I am delighted to have this opportunity to celebrate with you and to share some thoughts.

To be human is to be able to interpret signs. God's miracles, done in us, are merciful signs meant to prompt our repentance. Job knows how moved he becomes by the beauty of a sunrise, but he realizes that he cannot command the dawn. To attend to our ability to perceive the One behind the beauty of reality is to listen to Jesus.

The reality question today is this: *how do we listen to Jesus; also, how do we live faithfully as Catholics, going forward in a culture that's skeptical, critical and even hostile, toward what we believe?*

Knighthood is an institution with very deep roots in the memory of the Church. Nearly 900 years ago, one of the great monastic reformers of the Church, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, ( who had a connection with Ireland through his great friend St. Malachy -who introduced the Cistercians into Ireland & founded (the old) Mellifont Abbey - described the ideal Christian knights as Godly men who *“shun every excess in clothing and food. They live as brothers in joyful and sober company (with) one heart and one soul. ... There is no distinction of persons among them, and deference is shown to merit rather than to noble blood. They rival one another in mutual consideration, and they carry one another's burdens, thus fulfilling the law of Christ.”*

Bernard had few illusions about human nature and he was anything but naïve. Writing at the dawn of the crusading era, in the early 12th century, he was well aware of the greed, vanity, ambition and violence that too often motivated Europe's warrior class, even in the name of religious faith.

Most of the men who took up the cause of aiding eastern Christians and liberating the Holy Land in the early decades of crusading did so out of genuine zeal for the Cross. But Bernard also knew that many others had mixed or even corrupt and evil motives. In his great essay "In Praise of the New Knighthood" (c. 1136) he outlined the virtues that should shape the vocation of every truly 'Christian' knight: - humility, austerity, justice, obedience, unselfishness and a single-minded zeal for Jesus Christ in defending the poor, the weak, the Church and persecuted Christians.

But human nature -- our basic hopes, dreams, anxieties and sufferings -- hasn't really changed. The basic Christian vocation remains the same: to follow Jesus Christ faithfully, and in following Jesus, to defend Christ's Church and to serve her people zealously, unselfishly and with all our skill.

Our life today may seem very different from life in the 12th century but the Church still, today, asks us to seek mutual respect with people of

other religious traditions, and to build common ground for cooperation wherever possible, to look for the Common Good of all, to be fearless witness to our faith in Jesus Christ, to be loyal subjects and defenders of the Church. To be loyal to Our Holy Father, Pope Francis. As Pope Francis said in his Apostolic Exhortation: *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel) ‘to be true evangelizers is to be missionaries for Christ’.

The Church needs men and women of holiness, courage and godliness today, more than at any time in her history. So does this country of Ireland – with its long and rich Catholic history and tradition , a society which is beset with so many difficulties and challenges; but yet a nation that still has an immense reservoir of faith, virtue, decency and many, many people of good will. This is why the Catholic ideal of knighthood and dame, with its demands of radical discipleship, is still alive and is still very much needed- *sacrificial service rooted in a living Catholic faith*. A new “spirit of knighthood” is what we need now -- unselfish, tireless, devoted disciples willing to face derision and persecution for Jesus Christ. We serve Our Holy Father best by serving God first, and by proving our faith in and through the example of our lives. We serve the message of the Gospel best by becoming ‘missionary disciples’ for the new Evangelisation. We can serve Him in the poor and marginalized.

This evening, I salute each of you, the members of the Irish Delegation of the **Sacred Military Constantinian Order of St. George**. In you the

Church recognises a vital truth which has been given renewed emphasis in our time. All Christians, incorporated into Christ and his Church through the sacrament of Baptism, are consecrated to God and called to work for his Kingdom. Every Christian (lay or clerical) is therefore an extraordinary work of God's grace and is called to the heights of holiness. You, as Knights and Dames, are called to witness courageously and publicly to the faith which you have received. By the sacrament of Confirmation, you have been further graced by the Holy Spirit with special strength to be witnesses of Christ and sharers in his mission of salvation.

Sometimes, lay men and women do not seem to appreciate fully the dignity and the vocation that is theirs as lay people. As God's holy people you are called to fulfill your role in the evangelisation of the world. You are that that 'chosen race', that 'holy priesthood', called to be 'the salt of the earth' and 'the light of the world'.' (I was at the opening of a new school this morning – the Le Cheile Secondary school, a catholic school, in Tyrrelstown – and I heard again how the pupils and all of us are called by God to be the 'light of the world').

One of the great documents from the Second Vatican Council is the **Constitution on the Church** (Lumen Gentium – 21 November 1964). 'The laity,' the Council says, 'by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to

the plan of God. They are called there by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven. In this way they may make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity.’ (Lumen Gentium n. 31)

It is your specific vocation and mission as a Knight or Dame of the Constantinian Order, to insert and to live, the Gospel message as a reality of the world in which you live and work. The great forces which shape the world – politics, the mass media, science, technology, culture, education, industry and work – are precisely the areas where you are especially competent to exercise your mission. If these forces are guided by people who are true Disciples of Christ, as missionaries of the new Evangelization, and who are, at the same time, fully competent in the relevant secular knowledge and skill, then the culture of our world can indeed be transformed from within - by the redeeming power of Christ – who is the light of the World..

It is not enough to rely on past achievements, or to confine our profession of faith to comfortable places and private gatherings of like-minded people. I believe God is calling people in Ireland today to a strong renewal of their Christian commitment in the public square, to permeate society with the leaven of the Gospel. We are living in a decisive moment in the history of the Catholic Church in Ireland. The old way of doing

things will not suffice – we need to face the challenges of today – especially the secularism that is sweeping our country, Europe and the West, today. The future shape and presence of our Church, of our Christian faith, will depend on how each and every one of us responds to the challenges that not only lie ahead but are challenging us now, as I speak.

Change is possible but it is not enough to leave it to others alone to bring change about – it needs all of us; it needs you and me. Acts of generosity to speak up, to reach out and to help others – especially our less well off, our sick and elderly, are asked from us. If we are to have a society worth living in, we need to rediscover our Christian values, of good neighborliness, which are not beholden to any Government or institution, but can and do form an essential part of our society. Without it, Ireland and its people will become still more lonely and isolated.

Each of us must ask, frankly and before God, what more can I do to bring the transforming message of the Gospel into our society in the particular circumstances of my life. Perhaps some of us could do more in terms of promoting and defending the truth of the Gospel in the public and political square. Perhaps some of us can do more in terms of prayer. Perhaps – and I emphasise this as members of the Sacred Military Constantinian Order of St. George - some can do more in terms of charitable activity – remembering Trocaire, the Society of St Vincent de

Paul, but especially the Homeless or those charitable organizations which help the less well off and the vulnerable in our society.

There are many areas that we hold dear and to be true which are under threat – such as the Family. Yet, too often we are afraid to stand up against the tide of what is assumed to be popular opinion, that would ignore or demean marriage and the family– often driven by a media that creates and follows its own agenda - on this and so many other issues. If you believe in the sacrament of marriage as between a man and a woman, in your children, your grand-children and their future, we should pray for the success of the Extra Ordinary Synod of Bishops which is to be held in Rome starting Monday. There has already been a worldwide consultation process by Pope Francis on the Family. The Synod will look, listen and act upon what people around the world are saying. [Archbishop Martin will represent the Irish Church at that Synod].

I ask that in the Ireland of today, you continue to show by whatever means, that there is a real place for God in our society by your witness and by your caring for those of our neighbour who are most in need.

As Jesus said in our Gospel Reading: “Anyone who listens to you listens to me”. ‘Anyone who rejects you rejects me and the One who sent me’.