

We must remember though what the word 'church' originally meant in the days of the apostles and the earliest Christians. It did not refer to a building; it referred instead to 'the people' a people who have heard the call to follow Christ, and to gather together as a holy congregation. They didn't have their own buildings, they gathered instead wherever they could, to pray and celebrate the Eucharist in memory of the Lord.

The story of the congregation of this church building, is the story of the followers of Christ who have listened to and tried to faithfully follow the voice of their Lord and God. This 40th Anniversary Mass invites us to remember that each congregation of the Catholic faithful, no matter how large or small, is part of a larger story, part of a bigger family, part of a Church not made of wood, brick or stone but a living body whose head is Christ.

Each congregation and all of its members are part of a Catholic family present throughout the world, a Church whose life extends out, not only in terms of streets and neighbourhoods, parishes and dioceses, but which also reaches out in the context of past, present and future time, embracing always the universal mission that Christ entrusted to His apostles and disciples. We, His living stones, are connected each to the other, with bonds so strong that the walls of no physical building can contain them, nor even can death destroy them.

The true story of this church then, is not about the physical building but its living stones, the followers of Christ who have gathered here faithfully over the past 40 years, and the community of the Catholic faithful which preceded it who gathered in times of poverty, danger and persecution. Its story will continue too into the future if we but play our part in witnessing to our faith and ensuring it is passed on to the next generation.

What a joy it is then to be in this house of prayer dedicated to the Lord, surrounded by one another's faith and the prayer of those who have gone before us and to reflect on what this building has held these past 40 years. We think of the great number who have been brought into the family of the Church through the Sacrament of Baptism, those who made their first Holy Communion or those who have come here week by week, to receive the Lord's Body and Blood in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist.

We think of the many young people who have received the Sacrament of Confirmation and those who were received into the communion of the Catholic Church. We thank God for those who have started out a life together through the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. And we remember particularly those whose Requiem Mass and funerals were celebrated here and who were commended to the love and mercy of God on their final journey.

We are also aware of the silent witness of grace in those who received forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance. And of course, we give thanks for the ministry of the priests who have served the people of this church these last forty years, grateful for their fidelity and their witness to help others grow in holiness. What a testimony to prayer and to grace these walls could tell if they could speak.