

COMMEMORATIVE MASS FOLLOWING POLISH AIR DISASTER
ST MARY'S METROPOLITAN CATHEDRAL, EDINBURGH
INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY
CARDINAL KEITH PATRICK O'BRIEN
SATURDAY 17 APRIL 2010

It is my privilege on this sad occasion to welcome you all to our Metropolitan Cathedral at the heart of our capital city of Edinburgh.

I welcome most warmly the Lord Provost of our City of Edinburgh and the Lady Provost; the Secretary of State for Scotland, the Rt Hon Jim Murphy; Ms Fiona Hyslop MSP, Minister for Culture and External Affairs, representing the First Minister of Scotland; Councillors and Officials of the City of Edinburgh Council.

It gives me particular pleasure to welcome also the Consul General of Poland, Dr Thomaz Trafas – along with other members of the Consular Corps in Edinburgh and Leith, namely the Consuls General of the Czech Republic, Germany, Russia, Slovenia and Sweden – with apologies being received from the Consuls General of Ireland and of Hungary.

As you know, there are many representatives of our Polish priests gathered at Mass this evening, led by Father Marian Lekawa SAC, the Rector of the Polish Catholic Mission in Scotland and priests from the Pallotine and Salvatorian Orders, as well as priests on loan to Scotland from various Dioceses of Poland – all being joined by members of our own diocesan priests and religious priests here in Scotland.

We gather, of course, to commemorate that sad occasion which took place just one week ago as we had celebrated the great Feast of Easter and were preparing to celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday – that tragic plane disaster in which 96 Polish citizens lost their lives.

We think in a special way of the President of Poland, Lech Kaczynski and his wife, Maria, who both died in that crash. You yourselves are aware of how so much of the history of the faithful people of Scotland is captured in the life of your late President, who presented an image of honesty and integrity to all his people. A devout Catholic all his life, he was always strong in his political views, serving his people and his country as best he could, with the assistance of his wife, until his tragic death.

The First Minister of Scotland, the Rt Hon Alex Salmond MSP, said in his message of sympathy that he would like to take this opportunity to extend, through the Cardinal, to the Polish priests and Catholic congregation, the condolences he has expressed more generally and he went on to say that, of course, he recognised that one of the reasons for the historic connection between Poland and Scotland has been the joint faith of so many Poles and Scots, and that these bonds of faith and friendship will be a source of support at this difficult time.

We remember all the dead in our prayers, entrusting them to the loving mercy of God our Father; we pray for all who mourn that they may be comforted; and we remember all of the peoples of Poland that they may recover from this tragedy with their accustomed resilience, continuing to take their place among the great nations of the world.