

TRIENNIAL RALLY OF UNION OF CATHOLIC MOTHERS

ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL, EDINBURGH

HOMILY PREACHED BY CARDINAL KEITH PATRICK O'BRIEN

SUNDAY 25TH APRIL 2010

INTRODUCTION:

I am delighted to be able to be with you here in our Metropolitan Cathedral in Edinburgh so soon after our celebrations for the great feast of Easter.

From our reading of the scriptures at this time, one thing is evident - it is that **women had a vitally important part to play in the accounts of the Resurrection.**

At the Easter Vigil Mass in successive years we are given the accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke. They record the women coming to the tomb first – with St Mark adding that: “When the Sabbath was over, Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices with which to go and anoint him”. On being told that “he has risen from the dead and now he is going before you to Galilee” the women came quickly away from the tomb and ran to tell the disciples.

In St. John's Gospel for Easter Sunday morning we are told that “Peter set out with the other disciple to go to the tomb” – and that “till this moment they had failed to understand the teaching of scripture, that he must rise from the dead”. The empty tomb, the call to the disciples, that basic message of Christianity that Jesus rose from the dead – was initially discovered and then related to the disciples, by the women.

APOSTOLATE OF THE LAITY:

It is just three months since the Scottish Bishops were in Rome for our Ad Limina visit meeting with Pope Benedict XVI. We addressed a message to him and then he addressed a specific message to us particularly regarding the “**specific vocation of the laity**”.

Having spoken of the indispensable role of the priest in the Church's life he said that we must have a correct understanding of the specific vocation of the laity as “sometimes there is a tendency to confuse lay apostolate with lay ministry”.

Consequently I emphasise to you all today that the vision of the Second Vatican Council is that **wherever the lay faithful “live out their baptismal vocation – in the family, at home, at work – they are actively participating in the Church's mission to sanctify the world”.**

Consequently, having listened to the Gospel accounts of the Resurrection; and being reminded by the Pope of the vision of the Second Vatican Council, I take this opportunity of reminding you all particularly the Members of the Union of Catholic Mothers of your own distinct baptismal vocation – that of living out your vocation in your families, at home, and at work and consequently actively participating in the Church's mission to sanctify the world.

This is indeed a tremendous challenge to you all, and this is an opportunity for me on behalf of the Bishops of Scotland to thank you for the magnificent ways in which you do live out your own lay vocation both of learning and then of teaching.

VOCATION OF LEARNING AND TEACHING:

Here at the Triennial Rally in a very beautiful way this afternoon already you have been living out your vocation by **learning from two women** (Ms Donna Nicholson and Ms Claire Murphy) **and a priest** (Father Martin Chambers) – you have been learning of the rights of the individual – whether that individual is an infant in the womb or just born; whether or not that individual is living in a parish in the Third World or here in Scotland; or whether that individual is in need of specialised care if terminally ill and dying.

Having received this knowledge it is your responsibility to continue your vocation by passing it on. And of course **there could not be a better time to teach than in these days and weeks prior to a General Election.**

But, you might ask just what do you teach? The Bishops of Scotland in their own pre-election teaching document released earlier this week, have reminded you of **five specific issues on which you might teach** – seeking the response from individual candidates in your constituencies who are putting themselves forward for election.

The issues which we suggest must be considered are the following: **The rights of the unborn; family life; justice for all peoples of the world; religious freedom and freedom of conscience; and assisted suicide and euthanasia. They are issues, which resonate in a special way with women:**

- **The unborn literally owe their existence to women.**
- **Family life is invariably secured and stabilised by the actions of women.**
- **Justice for all is the hope and prayer of women everywhere.**
- **Freedom of religion allows the faith we learned at our mother's knee to endure and sustain us.**
- **Euthanasia is a special challenge for legions of women who care for the elderly, ill and infirm.**

These are major moral concerns about which every Catholic woman and indeed every Catholic must indeed “make their faith count!”

Perhaps your greatest influence will be in your own family circle at home when you will be able to discuss these issues with your husband, with your children and children's families, with those whom you meet each day.

If you are in employment at this present time there are so many varied opportunities for you to discuss these vitally important issues with colleagues and friends prior to the General Election.

I give you every encouragement in this vocation which is yours and ask you to grasp every opportunity of learning more yourself about these issues and then handing on your own knowledge.

CONCLUSION:

The women who in their charity two thousand years ago were going to anoint the dead body of Jesus did not realise the heavy responsibilities which would lie on their shoulders in telling the disciples of the Lord just what they had seen. Perhaps you have never before fully realised the heavy responsibilities which are on your shoulders to be a teacher of the faith, a teacher of moral values, and

a teacher of basic prayer in your families, in your homes and in your parishes. Consequently I remind you of that wonderful vocation now at this vitally important time in the history of our country!

Go forward confidently aware of the influence which you have had and which you will have. Go forward confidently aware that you are not alone in your vocation but you have the strength of being a Member of the Union of Catholic Mothers; go forward confidently in your faith aware of the power of the sacraments which you have received and aware of that daily bread which you receive regularly and strengthens you for your journey.

On behalf of my brother Bishops and myself I thank you all most sincerely for the ways in which you have supported us in our every endeavour especially through your prayers and your prayers for support for the clergy in this the “Year of the Priest”.

Strengthened by ongoing prayer we will indeed go forward evermore confidently in our union with Christ and with one another – leading lives worthy of our vocation as Christians.