



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO IRELAND

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II DURING HIS VISIT TO CLONMACNOIS

Clonmacnois

Sunday, 30 September 1979

Dear brothers and sisters,

This visit to Clonmacnois gives me the opportunity to render homage to the traditions of faith and Christian living in Ireland.

In particular, I wish to recall and honour the great monastic contribution to Ireland that was made here on this revered spot for one thousand years, and whose influence was carried over Europe by missionary monks and by students of this monastic school of Clonmacnois.

When we look at the works of faith, we must give thanks to God. Thanks to God for the origins of this apostolic faith in Ireland. Thanks to God for the saints and apostles and all who were the instruments for implanting and keeping alive this faith, and who "have done God's will throughout the ages". Thanks to God for the generosity of faith that brought forth fruits of justice and holiness of life. Thanks to God for the preservation of the faith in integrity and purity of teaching. Thanks to God for the continuity of the message of the Apostles handed down intact to this day.

Never forget the wonderful boast and commitment made by Saint Columban to Boniface IV in Rome : "We Irish ... are disciples of Saints Peter and Paul ... ; we hold unbroken that Catholic faith which we first received from you".

And in Ireland today, this Catholic faith is unbroken, alive and active. By the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ and by the power of his grace, it can, and must, always be this way in Ireland.

Clonmacnois was long the centre of a renowned school of sacred art. The Shrine of Saint Manchan, standing on the altar today, is one outstanding example of its work. This is therefore a fitting place for me to express my gratitude for the works of Irish sacred art, several pieces of which have been presented to me on the occasion of my visit.

Irish art embodies in many instances the deep faith and devotion of the Irish people as expressed in the personal sensitivity of its artists. Every piece of art, be it religious or secular, be it a painting, a sculpture, a poem or any form of handicraft made by loving skill, is a sign and a symbol of the inscrutable secret of human existence, of man's origin and destiny, of the meaning of his life and work. It speaks to us of the meaning of birth and death, of the greatness of man.

Praised be Jesus Christ !

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