

A warm welcome to our celebration today here at St Mary's Cathedral

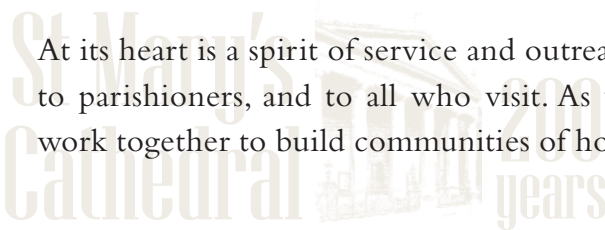
A WARM WELCOME TO ALL AS WE CELEBRATE the bicentenary of this beloved place of worship, St Mary's Cathedral.

The title *St Mary's* has deep historical roots, and was first given to the Benedictine and later Cistercian abbeys located in this part of the city in the 12th century. After the Reformation, the title was applied, in 1697, to a newly erected Protestant church. Archbishop Edmund Byrne, while still in hiding, made it the Catholic parish of St Mary in 1707. The Penal Laws were gradually repealed allowing for a new more substantial chapel, St Mary's, to be built in 1729 in Liffey Street, and subsequently listed by the authorities as the *Liffey Street Mass-house*.

As the Catholic population grew, it was clear that a new approach was required. Archbishop John Thomas Troy OP purchased the current site on Marlborough Street in 1803, and after many delays construction began. It was his successor, Archbishop Daniel Murray, who dedicated the new cathedral on 14th November 1825 – the feast of our diocesan patron, St Laurence O'Toole.

Looking back through the lens of 200 years it is impossible to calculate how many millions of people have stopped by the 'Pro' even for a short prayer on their way to work, in town shopping or for Mass. Imagine the number of candles that have been lit here as people entrusted their special intentions to their chosen intercessor or came back to say thanks. For 200 years this central place of worship in our city has carried the burdens of many, and celebrated joyful events and state occasions.

At its heart is a spirit of service and outreach to parishioners, and to all who visit. As we work together to build communities of hope



in our diocese, let us take time to celebrate the rich heritage of the principal church.

For over 100 years the liturgies have been enriched by the generations of members of the Palestrina Choir and their supportive families. Their reputation ensures them a special place in the cultural life of the city. St Mary's Pro-Cathedral Girls' Choir was founded in 2009 – a welcome development. Contemporary worship music has also been part of the fabric of the liturgies for almost half a century in a variety of languages. The organ, rebuilt in 1971 by Walker & Sons, especially suited to accompanying the human voice, continues to enrich the Cathedral liturgies. So there is much to celebrate in this bicentenary weekend.

The dedicated staff and volunteers are a rich resource and have been an invaluable grace over the years. They have been encouraged by generations of priests who selflessly served the people of Dublin in the celebration of the Sacraments and the administration of this Cathedral Parish. The parishioners have been blessed by the generosity of religious sisters and their wonderful service to those in need and to the liturgy.

It is fitting that we start a new chapter in the life of St Mary's Cathedral as we come to the end of the Jubilee Year of Hope.

Pope Leo XIV said: 'The Jubilee we are now celebrating helps us to realise that hope is a constant source of joy, whatever our age. When that hope has also been tempered by fire over the course of a long life, it proves a source of deep happiness.'

As we mark 200 years of prayer, music, service and beauty, that sense of deep happiness can be truly ours and is a richness to be celebrated.

