

Chapter Mass for deceased bishops, priests and deacons of the Lancaster Diocese
St Peter's Cathedral 4th November 2008

Scripture Readings

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; John 3: 16-18

Homily, given by Rt Rev. Michael Campbell OSA, Coadjutor Bishop of Lancaster

We gather here in St. Peter's Cathedral in the faith of the Church to remember prayerfully and collectively the deceased bishops (in fact today is the anniversary of the second Bishop of this Diocese: Bishop Flynn died on this day in 1961), priests and deacons of our Lancaster Diocese. We do so in our offering of Mass, that greatest of all memorial acts, when we recall in sacramental signs of bread and wine the saving death and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. As we do this in memory of the Son of God, we make our deceased brothers in holy orders part of that sacred remembering. Today, through our commemoration, the fruits of the Lord's passion fall upon them in a unique way.

Our Catholic tradition has long encouraged us to pray for the dead, a holy practice which resonates with our deepest instincts. And although those present will have known, respected and even loved many of those for whom we pray today, yet in the words of the Apostle to the Church in Thessalonica *"we do not grieve about them, like the other people who have no hope."* The bedrock of our faith is the resurrection of the Lord, the pledge and guarantee that those who have died believing in Christ will one day rise with Him in glory. In this, we have the assurance of faith. There is, therefore, a sense of peace today in our remembering, one suffused with Christian hope that the faith of those who lived and believed in Christ will not be in vain. To quote Paul again, *"with such thoughts as these you should console one another."*

The words of the Lord in our gospel passage are surely among the most sublime in all of Sacred Scripture, *"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, so that all who believe in Him might not perish"*. As we remember the dead, we the living find consolation and reassurance in this most wonderful truth. As a pilgrim Church, our faith is sustained by the knowledge in faith that in the end God's love will prevail and have the last word, a love which impelled Him to send His only Son to us as a shining light in an often dark world. In this year dedicated to his memory, and on a day when we recall our dead, that stirring passage from Paul to the Romans seems particularly appropriate: *"For I am certain of this: neither death nor life, no angel, no prince, nothing that exists, nothing still to come, not any power, or height or depth, nor any created thing, can ever come between us and the love of God, made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

May our departed brothers who served in the sacred ministry rest in peace.