


Opening of Margaret Aylward Centre

 dublindiocese.ie/opening-of-margaret-aylward-centre/

OPENING OF THE MARGARET AYLWARD CENTRE FOR FAITH AND DIALOGUE

Reflections of Archbishop Diarmuid Martin – Holy Faith Convent, Glasnevin, 1st February 2014

“This is an extraordinary building. It takes us all by surprise. It is a wonderful example of contemporary creativity in building and style and yet it is surrounded by so many symbols of Dublin life, past and present.

It is like a new frame within which and through which we see Dublin differently. The building and Dublin life come together into a type of contemporary fusion which challenges our set patterns and leads to reflection. It is a space where we are challenged to reflect anew, but not to flee from the realities that surround us.

The building reflects the inspiration which gave rise to the project. It is a contribution which springs from the charism of a religious congregation which has set deep roots in this part of Dublin, applying that original charism to a Dublin that is changing. It is to be a place where Christians and believers of other faiths can come together to contribute to that other contemporary fusion which is the emerging civic and religious culture of the Dublin of tomorrow.

This is a space which is surrounded by a Dublin which is changing and is becoming more secular. But it is a space that sets out constructively that society needs and is enriched by the contribution of faith and of men and women of faith who wish to live fruitfully side by side with men and women of differing inspirations in building hope and purpose and confidence in the future of Dublin and its citizens, especially its young people.

This is indeed a beautiful and comfortable space for reflection but it must never become a comfort zone for the like minded, even for the well-intentioned like minded. Pope Francis continually reminds us that the place of the Church is in the peripheries of society, not just the geographical or economical peripheries, but in the profound peripheries of alienation and hopelessness and search for meaning and purpose among the men and women of our time. The Church can never be just an inward-looking society, preoccupied by its own challenges. The more the Church becomes over concerned by its internal challenges the more it will actually become more inward looking and never the out-going reflection of the challenging message of Jesus who cares.

This building will hopefully become a place where Christians of differing denominations will come together in the realisation that despite our differences there are so many things that unite us and that to fail to recognise those real and existing signs of unity is to betray a real unity in faith and charity.

It might seem strange that on a joyous celebration such as this, I should allude to the closeness of this building and of this project to Glasnevin cemetery. Some might think it insensitive even to mention even the matter of geographical nearness.

Our faith is however always about the mystery of life and death. That was the theme of our Gospel reading. But that Gospel forcefully reminds us that our faith is one where death is never the end; it reminds us that Jesus heals and reconciles and restores. Our faith in Jesus challenges us then to bring healing and reconciliation and restoring power into our world and our times, especially to those whose lives are trapped in burdens in any way, Our faith in the Jesus who wishes that men and women can live their lives to the fullest should encourage us to enrich societal reflection on the value of life and so enrich the quality of life of those around us who so often fall into the temptations of superficiality and emptiness which can lead to frustration and even despair.

This newly dedicated space is inserted into the wider space where the spirit of Margaret Aylward is still tangible even in our day in the educational work which has taken place here over many generations. Education is a celebration of human talents and human goodness and truth. This new space will hopefully be a further development of the innovative work of Margaret Aylward which has had such an influence for good in this part of Dublin. May it be a place of encounter and of blessing for many years to come.”