

Speaking notes for Homily at 2017 Annual Mass in Caherdaniel Church for the deceased of the O Connell family

Dr Ray Browne

Is it true to say that a Summer School is successful if it is a source of encouragement to participants? – if it gives fresh motivation to live life well?

Can we take a few moments to ponder how we feel as the School ends. Has it given us an energy, a passion for history, - world history, local history? Or a passion for citizenship, - for universal values such as democracy, pacifism, freedom of religion? - A passion for faith in God?

Might we ponder three questions:

The first: If Daniel O Connell could walk among us today, 170 years after his death, would he be impressed / satisfied / delighted, with the world of 2017?

It is six, seven or more generations since he died. How would he react to the modern world of motorways, airports; electricity, computers, internet, email ? to all the countries and continents, to the U.N., - to the reality of Ireland and its place in the world?

Presumably he would be truly amazed, overall would he be positive or negative? What would be his overall reaction to the world of this generation of O Connell's and the world of his native Cahirsiveen and Caherdaniel?

A second question: What will the world be like when we are 170 years dead, the world of 2187?

Maybe a slightly odd question! Is it hard, is it frightening to try to imagine? Is it a sign of real adult maturity to be able to consider generations after us. My mother often used the phrase, “we are only passing through”. Does that thought evoke humility in us all?

What further massive progress in science and technology in the 170 years ahead? What will life be like for our descendants, seven generations on? What of the E.U., what of the island of Ireland? Do we accept there still be a world fully alive 170 years after us? What positive contribution will our generation have made to that world? How will our generation be remembered ?

The third question: Knowing the issues Daniel O Connell passionately championed, what issues would Daniel have us champion today?

As regards Ireland: every citizen, people of all ages, to have the basics to live a fulfilling, happy, meaningful life, - “take pride in taking care of each other”? Daniel championed the rights of all, irrespective of religion, he championed non-violence, an end to slavery. What today would he champion? Where would he see injustice in globalisation as we have it?

What of poverty, - the total lack of basic necessities and facilities for half of our world?
What of ecology and of the grave threats to the environment, - the causes of climate change?
What of methods of governance in all the nations?

Would he say to us: “you are doing fine, steady as she goes”, or “wake up! Horrible things are happening! Shout it from the house-tops!”? For the next day or two, ponder how this summer school has motivated you, has it renewed your energy / motivation for life?

A final point: In 1844, in his late sixties, Daniel built the chapel we held our conferences in yesterday. For the first 30 years of his adult life so much of his energies went in pursuit of Catholic Emancipation. If he was among today, would he worship with us at this altar? Would he see communities of believers / parishes as making a very important contribution in society? Would he say, “Faith is a blessing, a treasure”? Would he willingly make Peter’s Gospel confession, “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God”?

Let us worship God in this Mass. We do so rejoicing: Christ, the Son of the Living God has won a victory over death, for all people. Through his Goodness and Mercy we can humbly pray for our deceased loved ones, praying especially in this Mass for the deceased of the O Connell family of Derrynane.

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