



**Homily for the Installation of Canon David Hayman
into the Cathedral Chapter**

Cardiff Cathedral

Tuesday 8th December 2020

The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception

Archbishop George Stack

One of the most striking features in this church is the great west window depicting the proclamation of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. If you stand outside the main doors and look up, you can see nothing of its beauty or details. It is only when the lights are on, or the daylight shining through, that the window comes to life and light. Just like a mosaic or tapestry which are worked on from the back only reveal their true beauty when they are turned around and their creator sees the product of their intense work and artistry as things of complete beauty. So it is with our faith.

The various titles and devotions to Our Lady, and the different feasts we celebrate in her honour, are like the stones which make up a mosaic. Each one interconnected with the other. Together creating what Hans von Balthasar called a *“constellation of stars around her head”*, in close proximity to the Morning Star whose shining we await during Advent. The Revelation of St. John describes this constellation in mystical and symbolic language in the Book of the Apocalypse – and in our window. *“And a great sign appeared in the heavens, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars”*. Twelve stars on a blue background. The twelve tribes

of Israel? The twelve apostles? The flag of Christian Europe?
No wonder Ian Paisley found the image so difficult!

Feasts, hymns, and litanies all try to express and explain the role of Mary in the history of salvation. She is *“the highest honour of our race”*. She is the one who listens. She is the one who conceives Christ in her heart before she conceives him in her womb. And because of this “contemplation” she is the model of personal holiness. She teaches us how to become “disciples” before we become “apostles”.

Mary is the sign and symbol of everything the human race could have been. In perfect harmony with the will and the life and the love of God. In paradise. That is why she is described in liturgy and theology as the “New Eve”. In God’s pre-vision she is protected from the stain of Original Sin because she would contradict the sin of pride which, as the poet John Milton wrote, *“is the source and origin of all the sins that are committed”*. (Paradise Lost)

Mary is the sign and simple of everything the human race is on our pilgrim journey through life, as we struggle to make sense of its complexities and contradictions. It’s joys and hopes, it’s sadness and suffering. Our Lady of Sorrows can speak to the homeless, the exile, the concerned parent: *“My*

son why did you do this to us? Did you not know that your father and I would be looking for you?". Standing at the foot of the cross, she can speak to all who suffer. "Where is God in the midst of human suffering?" we ask. "Here", says Jesus, with arms outstretched on the wood of the cross.

Mary is a sign and symbol of what we all one day shall be. Never separated from God through sin in life, not separate from Him in death either. She is united with God in the resurrection. We call it her Assumption into heave. The Orthodox call it her Dormition, her falling asleep into the arms and the vision of God – the destiny to which we are all called. Cardinal Hume often spoke of the final judgement as being nothing more – or less- than us speaking into the ear of God those things we could never tell others about ourselves. Perhaps we could not even tell ourselves.

It is a joy and a privilege to celebrate this Feast of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, the Patroness of our Diocese. If it were possible to enhance that feast, the Installation of a new Canon into the Cathedral Chapter would fulfil that purpose. The Statutes of the Cathedral Chapter state *"Priests who are of sound doctrine and life and who have exercised a praiseworthy ministry are to be appointed to the Chapter"*. The work of Canon David Hayman as Diocesan Chancellor has been, and I hope it will continue to be, an outstanding and

praiseworthy ministry. At the beginning of this homily, I spoke about the fragments of stained glass which make up a beautiful window. The tesserae which make up a beautiful mosaic. The strands of wool that weave a vibrant tapestry. David does even more than that. In his work for people with broken marriages and fragmented lives, he has helped them put back together again the picture and the story of their lives. He does this so that each person, each couple, each parent can create “something beautiful for God” in their love for each other in the family. And as we know, the family is the bedrock of society and the Church.
