

150th ANNIVERSARY OF AGHAVILLY CHURCH, ARMAQH: 29 APRIL 1991.

Significant moment in history of parish.

Worship and witness stretching back 150 years. Several generations: spiritual home. A night of thanksgiving, reflection, dedication.

Thanksgiving:

For God's love and mercy and for years of opportunity to worship God. For many lives who found here grace of God. For devoted clergy and laity who have given so much and received so much in return. But chiefly for this place of God - continuing witness, continuing presence, continuing symbol of worshipping community. We can gain great strength from enduring evidence of Church - founded by Christ - not interested in structures - based on people - ordinary people - baptised, sent out as disciples, at foot of cross. So, Body of Christ, people we think of tonight.

Reflection:

We reflect on trusteeship we have inherited. Church is a sacred trust. A trust is something we receive from someone else, have use of for a time, for a specific purpose. What is it? Means of believing, means of worshipping, means of receiving spiritual encouragement. Like all trusts we will be called to give an account of our trusteeship. What will balance sheet look like? Will it show we have been faithful and trustworthy: what are we going to hand on? Care, good management. But most of all - have we used it properly. Not just what Church can do for us - but what we can do for it. Primals' sense of privilege of worship - we don't know how much we are privileged to worship in freedom. There are those who do not enjoy that freedom. How conscious are we of privilege of being members of Church?

Dedication:

Great need to be dedicated to things of God to-day. Many calls for dedication - not all causes are praiseworthy. Self-centredness, self-interest, ambition - call is for a new generation of those who put Christ first. How? Denial, taking up a cross and following. Not easy road. But crucifixion led to Easter morning.