

# Mass at All Saints Chapel at Wardour Castle

Dear friends,

## **Introduction**

The Latin word “recuso,” or “I refuse,” is the origin of the word “recusant,” which is used to describe those Catholic families in England who steadfastly resisted, at the cost of property, liberty, and even life, the incursions of a government which sought forcibly to separate them from communion with the Vicar of Christ on earth, the Pope.

Such were the Arundells, the occupants first of the Old Wardour Castle, and later of this edifice. It is a privilege for me, as Archbishop of Baltimore, to visit Wardour Castle for the first time, and to celebrate the Holy Mass here, as this place for generations has enjoyed a warm and close bond with the Archdiocese of Baltimore. Indeed, I am aware that in the very earliest days of this structure, Father John Carroll, who would go on to be the first Archbishop of Baltimore, for a short time was the guest and Lord Arundell, here at Wardour Castle.

## **Gifts of the Holy Spirit**

It is in this context of gratitude that we can receive into our hearts and minds the exceptionally beautiful Scripture readings which the Church sets before us in these beginning days of Advent. The Prophet Isaiah, looking forward to the coming of the Messiah, on whom the Spirit of the Lord would rest, enumerates for us what we know today as the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. We received these gifts first in Baptism, and then, more perfectly, in Confirmation. Among them, Isaiah writes, are wisdom and understanding, counsel and strength, knowledge and fear of the Lord.

These gifts have been on full display in the sons and daughters of this land who poured out their blood in defense of and in witness to the Catholic Faith, men and women about whose lives we will think and pray a great deal in these next few, privileged days.

It might strike us also that, here we are, in this chapel, freely celebrating Mass. There is no need for secrecy, no threat of informants infiltrating our numbers. There is no need for me to have recourse to a “priest hole,” should some modern-day Topcliffe come pounding on the door. But as we are all aware, it has not always been so among the green hills of England. This well puts us in mind of Our Lord’s words in the Gospel: “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I say to you, many... desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it.”

This is not to say, dear friends, that the days of “priest holes” and secretive worship are definitively in the past. Far from it. The martyrs of this land call out to us from their place in Heaven, summoning us to vigilance & courage, for the times of Campion and Fisher & More have been visited upon our world again, in the bloody religious persecutions in the Middle East and Africa and in the more subtle but very real incursions against religious liberty occurring even in democratic countries.

## **Conclusion**

For now, in this place which has seen so much history and where the flame of faith has been kept alive, let us give thanks to the Lord for the gift of His Church, which He sent out to all the nations, “beginning from Jerusalem.” From Jerusalem it eventually made its way to the shores of England, and through some of the remarkable people who inhabited the environs of this place, it made its way to a place called Baltimore.

May the grace of Christ strengthen and sustain His Church, both here in England, and in the United States of America, and in the whole world, so that when he comes again, he will find the flame of faith burning brightly.

May God bless us, and keep us in His love!