

# Stanbrook Abbey

## Blessing of the East Wing site, 6 February 2014

*The winter of 2014 will be remembered for days of endless rain and high winds. It was in the middle of this we began phase II of our monastery building. This is the east wing, which includes our Abbey Church, Blessed Sacrament Chapel, parlours, front hall and the shell of the Guest Wing. The latter will be completed when more funds become available.*



*6 February 2014 dawned mild and overcast but as the morning progressed the sun fought to break through occasionally. The previous day had been another wild wet day with yet more gale force winds so the Lord was blessing our new beginnings.*

*Bishop Terence Patrick Drainey, Bishop of our diocese of Middlesbrough had kindly agreed to cut the first sod, bless the site of the new building and the foundation stone.*

*Tony O'Brien, our maintenance manager, with the help of Sr Scholastica, had set up a little platform in the area of our potential new Abbey Church. (The ground underneath was very soggy). Richard Cavadino, our Project Manager and Andrew Walker of QSP Construction who are contracted to build the East Wing arrived*



*about 10.15 with the foundation stone and the ceremonial spade! We set up the stone on a bench to the side of the platform and placed spade where Bishop Terry could easily reach it.*

*Bishop Terry had also arrived at 10.15 in time for Mass to begin at 10.30am. It was a votive Mass of Our Lady of Consolation with the following readings. Fr Francis represented our Ampleforth brethren.*

*1 Peter 2: 4 - 9 (cornerstone, keystone, a people set apart to sing the praises of God)*

*R psalm : Psalm 121 'I rejoiced when I heard them say.....'*

*Gospel: Luke 6:46 - 49 (listening to God's words [Mary] and building on rock)*

### ***Homily***

*One of the ancient images of the Church which was revived and put into relief by the second Vatican Council was the Church as a Pilgrim People; the Church journeying together through the realities of this world and this life but heading towards another reality and another life, the reality of the fullness of the Kingdom and the sharing of the life of the Trinity for ever. Salvation has been won, we are already given it as a free gift, and we are offered all the means of attaining it. We are the people who struggle along in that mid-land between the Resurrection and the completion of all things when the Kingdom will come in all its fullness. We are on the way, we are travelling, in transit, no abiding city, no certain resting place in this world. Throughout the ages the Church has never ceased to remind us of these facts.*

*The reality, however, is that as human beings there is an innate desire to find a home, to BE somewhere, to belong, to rest, be at peace, have sure foundations, to have some security. These desires, drives, forces, aspirations, whatever you want to call them, are behind and before most of our actions and plans. It is so easy and natural to focus all our efforts into some form of nest-building. The voice of the Lord in the Scriptures and in the teaching of the Church warn us not to be seduced and tempted to end our journey before we reach our true destination.*

*The foundations of the Abbey Church which we are blessing today are a sign of the physical embodiment of God's presence among us. It will be the channel of his grace, the means of communicating with him and the place where his glory dwells. However, it is here, in this place because a long time ago God's pilgrim people came here, long before us gathered here today - those who sought to dedicate their lives totally to him in monastic consecration. They built one foundation, and then another. In due time you decided to move to this place after much prayer, thought and discernment. You came in pilgrimage from your former site to this one and brought everything with you that you thought you needed. But most of all you came yourselves. This foundation is part of your pilgrimage; for none of us have reached our destination yet, we are still on our journey. That is why St Peter reminds us that we are living stones from which the Church, Christ Body, is built. Even as we celebrate what has been achieved here so far and ask blessings on future projects, we must remember that buildings are only a means to an end. What is important is the gathering of God's people in the power of the Holy Spirit, to the praise and worship of the Father through Jesus Christ, his Son. This is the essence; this is what our*

*prayer today should be about, and in the end it goes beyond digging and beyond bricks and mortar, paint and decoration. It is about the precious cornerstone, Christ himself and the living stones which make the spiritual house, that is us, the people of God.*

*God, our Rock, long ago you delivered your word to your servant Moses. And you directed your people through your prophets. Through Jesus you have shown us how to listen to your word and practice it. Through your Holy Spirit build us into a new house with a sure foundation. From the store room of goodness call forth good deeds from our hearts. We ask this Father, through Jesus, our sure foundation, the rock of our salvation, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen. (Mark G Boyer, Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> Week of the Year, Day by Ordinary Day with Luke)*

*Bishop Terence Patrick Drainey  
Bishop of Middlesbrough*



*At the end of Mass the Bishop led the community outside in procession to the site of the east wing. The community sang Psalm 83 with the refrain: *How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord God of**

*Hosts.*

*The Bishop stood on the platform with Fr Francis and Mother Abbess. He said a prayer of blessing over the site and then sprinkled the site with water.*







*This done he then took the ceremonial spade and dug the first sod.*



*The blessing of the foundation stone followed. This had been placed on a bench to the side of the platform.*

*Some intercessory prayers were read by Mother Abbess to which the community made a short response. The bishop concluded the ceremony with a prayer, gave us his blessing and then processed back into the chapel.*



*We all returned outside for a community photograph before going to the refectory for a warming cup of coffee and delicious homemade biscuits.*

