



**R.C. DIOCESE OF ABERDEEN
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**Bishop of Aberdeen
Rt Rev Hugh Gilbert O.S.B.**

To be read out / communicated on the weekend of 15/16 August 2026.

Pastoral Letter on the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, August 2026

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is always a joy to celebrate the Assumption of Our Lady. This feast comes at the height of summer, when the harvest is being gathered and the Lord seems to crown the year with his goodness (cf. Psalm 65). Mary, the virgin mother of Jesus, is gathered body and soul into heavenly glory. In her we see the destiny prepared by God for his faithful people. She is a sign of sure hope and comfort for the pilgrim people of God.

In a time of complexity, her simplicity refreshes us: "I am the servant of the Lord". Amid so many threats to our humanity, she reminds us of the great opportunity of a Christ-full life which her Son has opened for us: "all generations will call me blessed".

Our Lady is the chief patron of our diocese, and our Cathedral Church is dedicated to St Mary of the Assumption. The Cathedral is not simply a parish church in Aberdeen. It is the mother church of the Diocese, the place where the Bishop has his "chair", the focal point of our common worship and communion. Whether we live in the city or the shires, in the Highlands, on the coast or in the islands, the Cathedral belongs to us all.

For this reason, I would like to draw your attention to the "Beauty for God" project, now entering its major phase. The project seeks to renew and enrich the sanctuary of St Mary's Cathedral so that it more clearly fulfils its deepest purpose: to draw minds and hearts towards God. As the Church teaches, our sacred buildings should be "worthy and beautiful", signs that point beyond themselves to the realities of heaven. Through beauty, the Gospel can speak in a way that words alone cannot always manage.

Many of you will already have seen the magnificent, suspended crucifix which now hangs above the altar. This was the first phase of the project and has shown its power to lift hearts. The second and final phase will bring together architecture, sacred art and craftsmanship in a way that enhances our liturgy and strengthens the Cathedral's witness to its City and beyond for generations to come. The designs feature a mural to be painted on the East Wall, centred on an image of Mary, filled with the Holy Spirit and surrounded by the Apostles.

What gives this project particular significance is that it has been conceived not merely for Aberdeen but for the whole Diocese. Stone and timber are being sourced from across the north of Scotland, from every corner of the Diocese. Different granites from around our territory will be incorporated into the work. In this way, the Cathedral will visibly express what it already is spiritually: a gathering point for God's people across the Highlands, the islands and the north-east. It is my hope that every parish and every community will recognise something of itself in this work and feel represented within it. The Cathedral should speak of our shared faith, our shared history and our shared future.

The Feast of the Assumption reminds us that beauty matters. Mary's life was beautiful because it was completely open to God. The Magnificat remains one of the most beautiful songs ever sung because it arose from a heart full of faith. Wherever God is welcomed, beauty follows. The Church has always sought to express this beauty through worship, music, architecture and art, not for their own sake, but because they help us glimpse the radiance of heaven and the presence of the Lord among us.

I have been privileged to serve this Diocese for 15 years now and I am conscious that each generation receives gifts from those who have gone before and is called to hand them on, enriched, to those who follow. The Cathedral we cherish today is itself the fruit of the generosity, sacrifice and vision of earlier Catholics, many of whom gave far beyond what was easy in order to create something lasting for the glory of God. We remain in their debt. Now the responsibility passes to us.

I am therefore much encouraged by the support already shown for this project. I am especially grateful to a benefactor whose remarkable generosity has made possible a matching-gift pledge of up to £300,000. Every donation received towards the project during this appeal will therefore be doubled in value, increasing both its impact and its significance for the future of the Cathedral and the Diocese.

Those who would like to learn more about the project, view the plans, or contribute to it can do so through the project website: [Beauty for God](#).

As we celebrate Our Lady's Assumption, I ask her intercession for every parish, every family and every person throughout the Diocese. May she help us keep our eyes fixed on her Son. May she teach us to recognise the beauty of holiness. And may she unite us ever more deeply as one diocesan family, journeying together towards the Kingdom where every earthly sign of beauty finds its fulfilment.

Yours devotedly in Christ,

+Hugh OSB

Bishop of Aberdeen

Our Lady, assumed into heaven, pray for us.