

## **Rite of Blessing of the Heritage Centre**

Almighty Father, everything good and beautiful comes from you, and under your providence we live thankfully and trustfully. Your gifts to us have been many, and we gather in thanksgiving for the gift of this building. We ask you to bless this place that will recall and safeguard the story of how, through the grace given to our Founder and to our Society, the knowledge of Christ came to people in Africa and Asia, Australasia and Latin America. We recall with gratitude the missionaries who have gone before us, the heroism of the pioneers and the faith of those who first heard the gospel. We thank you for the stories that have been written in every generations, stories of faith and love, of strenuous labour and creativity, stories of sacrifice and courage, stories of encouraging success and of instructive failure. We remember thankfully the great collaborators you have given to our Society in the formation of our missionaries and in their apostolate among the nations – our Sisters, the Franciscan Missionaries of St Joseph, the numberless Catechists who have guided us, the Zealators who have supported us and the Lay Missionaries who have joined our ranks. Lord, for the generations of Mill Hill Missionaries, and for all the men, women and children who have enabled us to fulfil the role given to us in the worldwide mission of the Church, we praise you and thank you.

We thank you in a special way today for your gifts embodied in this building – gifts of imagination and design, of craftsmanship and construction – and we ask your blessing on the archivists, builders, masons and carpenters who have served us well.

We ask your blessing also on the archivists who have preserved the records of the Mill Hill apostolate and on the people who have given them generous assistance. Bless also our Members who have written histories of our missions and accounts of their own missionary experience. And we pray that the work which will be done in the years ahead – in this fine Heritage Centre – will create a bond between our missionary ancestors and our young Mill Hill Missionaries from Africa and Asia, and inspire them to continue, with their own imagination and creativity, the story that began in the missionary heart of our founder Herbert Vaughan.

Let us listen to the words of Paul, Apostle to the Nations.

### **From the First Letter of St Paul to the Corinthians**

People must think of us as Christ's servants, stewards entrusted with the mysteries of God; and what is expected of stewards is that each one should be found trustworthy.

The different ways in which we brought the faith to you were assigned to us by the Lord. I did the planting, Apollos did the watering, but God made things

grow. Neither the planter nor the waterer matters; only God, who makes things grow. We are fellow workers with God, and you are God's building.

By the grave God gave me, I succeeded as an architect and laid the foundation on which

someone else is doing the building. Everyone doing the building must work carefully. For the foundation, no one can lay any other than the one which has already been laid, that is Jesus Christ. On this foundation you can build in gold, silver and jewels, or in wood, grass and straw. But, whatever the material, the work of each builder is going to be revealed when the day of the Lord comes.

The word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

The Lord be with you. *And also with you.*

Blessed are you, Lord God, king of creation: through your goodness you have given us this building to enrich our memory of your grace at work in our Founder and in the missionary lives of our brothers and sisters.

Let everyone who comes here find inspiration in the life stories of ordinary men and women who offered to the Lord their five loaves and two fish – the full measure of their faith, zeal and love for humanity; an offering that has multiplied beyond all expectation in the birth and growth of the young churches. And may everyone who comes here leave again with the desire to do their part, creatively and imaginatively, in the construction of your kingdom in the world, the kingdom of justice and peace.

Lord, may this water, + blessed in your name, be a sign of your protection on this building, on all who will work in it and on all things in it. Protect them from all harm. Give peace to the men and women who designed and built it, and may your blessing remain with them and with their families now and always. (Blessing of the building)

May the Father love you, and come to you and live with you. May the Son of God stay with you and give you his peace. May the Spirit of God teach you all things and remain with you forever. And may Almighty God bless you, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.