

Archbishop's address

Carissimi fratelli e sorelle

Grazie!

Con questa parola così semplice, voglio esprimere tante emozioni nel mio cuore stasera. Grazie a voi, un sogno si è trasformato in realtà. Grazie a voi, quelli che hanno perso la vita nell'Arandora star avranno finalmente un monumento degno. Grazie a voi, abbiamo costruito un giardino italiano nel cuore della città di Glasgow, nell'ombra della nostra cattedrale. Per la vostra generosità e per la vostra presenza qui stasera, vi ringrazio dal cuore!

With these few words expressed in the language of my forebears I thank all of you for the contribution you have made to the realisation of this cloister garden and its monument.

The monument itself was conceived as a way of recalling the sinking of the Arandora Star and the loss of life of so many innocents in the tragedy of war.

It then provided an opportunity for the marking of the contribution which the Italian Scots have made to Scottish society. The names of many of them who are no longer with us inscribed on the plaques which adorn the cloister walls.

The donations of many have ensured that the monument itself is a further contribution by the Italian community to the beauty of our city and an expression of thanks to its citizens for the welcome over the years we have received.

Finally the garden and monument at its centre provide a contemplation space, a place dedicated to peace and reconciliation, and the healing of memories.

While it may be true to say that the Arandora Star tragedy was for many an unknown or forgotten tragedy, it was nonetheless, for those who suffered sudden loss of husbands, fathers, brothers and friends a painful memory.

Since it was politically inconvenient to be recalled, such persons never had the satisfaction of knowing that many of their fellow citizens, and perhaps even those in government subsequently regretted the way in which men who were a settled part of the community suddenly became enemies, due to the fact that their country of origin had entered the war on the wrong side.

But this was a tragedy that was not to remain “dimenticata” forever – largely through the efforts of the writer and film maker Serena Balestracci, who we are delighted to say has travelled here tonight from Tuscany and whose book on the event, in English and Italian, can be purchased either here or at the reception.

I also want to pay tribute to the Roman architect, Giulia Chiarini, a professional friend of the Pontifical Scots College in Rome whose former Rector is now Administrator of this Cathedral, who translated an as yet inchoate dream into a hugely significant monumental work of art, the sort that will invite an interactive response from viewers reading the quotations from the Scriptures and the great Italian poets which reflect, from a deeply Christian angle, the mystery of life’s triumph over death.

I welcome distinguished guests from all over Scotland, England and Wales, Canada and from Italy. I greet the First Minister of Scotland, Alex Salmond; the United Kingdom’s Ambassador Designate to the Holy See, Nigel Baker, the Italian Consul General, Gabriele Papadia ; the Lady Provost of Glasgow, Sheena Winter; the leader of Glasgow Council Gordon Matheson. I greet Sir Rocco Forte of the Forte Charitable Trust; I welcome my friend that distinguished painter and honorary Scots Italian John Bellany with his wife Helen.

I offer a special welcome to the various delegations from Italy:

- From Picinisco, led by the deputy mayor, Riccardo Mancini.
- From Barga led by the deputy mayor Alberto Giovannetti and former Mayor Umberto Sereni

- From Molazzana , led by the mayor Rino Simonetti
- From Filignano, former deputy mayor Mr Coia
- From Pistoia, led by Dottore Andrea Ottanelli
- A voi tutti do un caloroso benvenuto!

There are a few other people I want to mention ... I am delighted to welcome tonight Cav Rando Bertoia, the only surviving internee of that tragedy, who is quite rightly here tonight as a VIP with his daughter!

And I must also pay tribute to the Italian Cloister Garden Committee without whom we would not be here tonight. They planned and fundraised for three years to make this garden and monument a reality and I want to thank them in a special way this evening. Their chairman, Ronnie Convery and the members of the committee Leandro Franchi, Alex Mosson, Giancarlo Romano and Mgr Chris McElroy.

But most of all my thanks tonight are expressed to you, dear friends whose generosity and shared vision have made today possible.

A voi tutti. Ripeto ancora una volta - Grazie infinite!