

Address of Bishop Penick at Centennial

Consecration and Re-Consecration

By Bishop Edwin A. Penick

On a centennial occasion such as this, I am conscious of two emotions contending for ascendancy in my heart. The first is gratitude for what this parish has been and meant and done in the past one hundred years; the second is a feeling of awesome responsibility as we contemplate the future. If I were competent to do so, what a joy it would be to engage in retrospect, and summon up remembrance of the rare and beloved personalities that have moved and had their being here,-- men and women of thought and action and ideas and unforgettable attitudes, around whom loyalties were focused, and from whom indelible influences were shed abroad. But I leave that privilege to the historian who is at home in the past. If I had the capacity to do so, what a fascinating venture it would be to probe the future and forecast the possible issue of coming events, and see the Church and campus moving together through the next century, like good neighbors, each respecting and helping and tending the other. But I leave that prophetic role to discerning minds whose insight into the present is deep enough to give some measure of foresight into the future. Without attempting, therefore, to be either historian or prophet, I wonder if I might be an observer for a few minutes, and recite those things which I have seen as a visitor to this parish for over twenty-five years.

During a period of unprecedented progress in almost every phase of human thought, to what has this parish borne witness? I do not speak with the assurance of a graduate of this University, nor with the authority of a communicant of the Chapel of the Cross, nor even as a native son of North Carolina, when I say without pride or local prejudice, that the Church has fulfilled, and is now fulfilling the purpose for which it was established here by holy men of old. And this faithfulness to a solemn trust has been, and is being evidenced, in the following ways:

1st. By keeping clean and clear the simplicities of the Christian faith when many sophisticated people were losing theirs.

2nd. By witnessing steadfastly and consistently to eternal truths, particularly at a time when transient interests were intellectually fashionable, and when secular things were dominating and fascinating and popularly regarded as all that was necessary for success in life.

3rd. By patient reiteration of the basic fact that truth is never at odds with itself, except in the shallow back-eddies of superficial minds, and that, as Dr. Wm. Percher DuBose of Sewanee used to say, contrary things need not contradict each other, and opposite things are not necessarily opposed.

4th. By proclaiming, year after year, that truth is not an academic goal to be achieved but a personal relationship to be sustained with Him who said: "I am the Truth." We all know that Truth has never been caught in a definition, but that it has been historically embodied in a Life. Apart from God, there is no truth.

5th. By insisting that an intelligent knowledge of the Holy Scriptures is essential for a liberal education.

6th. By demanding, inexorably and without compromise, that intellectual, moral and spiritual disciplines be maintained, without which the development of Christian character is impossible.

7th. By affirming with confident emphasis that human problems, with all their controversies and antagonisms, are susceptible, not only to adjustment, but to settlement at the higher level where Christianity is real, and where human tensions are resolved into a peace and unity that are found only where the will of God is obeyed and the minds of men are submissive to the mind of Christ.

In short, the Chapel of the Cross, standing for a century near a great University and at the cross-roads of human thought, where the traffic of ideas flows to and fro, has borne quiet and impressive witness to the incontrovertible truth that the fractional knowledge of man is good and is to be respected, but that the eternal wisdom of God is greater, and is to be revered forever. >