

Boarbank Hall - 90th Anniversary

21st September 2011

(Ecclesiasticus 50: 24-26; Acts 2: 42-47; John 15:12-17)



The well-chosen Scripture readings set the tone for this liturgy of Thanksgiving for ninety years of Boarbank. Ben Sira/Ecclesiasticus exhorts us to praise God in gratitude for his many blessings throughout the course of our lives, and to give us a joyful heart in doing so. You the community of Boarbank with your numerous friends will wish to do that this morning, as you recall ninety years of care and hospitality offered in Christ's name. As Saint Augustine would have put it, Boarbank has been a gift of God's grace to many people.

A writer remarked recently that the picture of life in that first community of believers, as depicted in our passage from Acts, has haunted the Church ever since. It describes a community united in mind and heart, sharing their possessions in common, with the Eucharist, the breaking of bread, the teaching of the apostles and prayer at the centre of everything. St. Augustine of Hippo was fired by this vision and wanted his friends in community to follow the same path. Fundamental and central to the life of Boarbank down the years have been the chapel and the common life. Like that first group of Christians, the sisters have been first and foremost a community of believers, gathered and nourished daily around the Eucharistic table in this chapel.

The Eucharist has enabled them to reach out in caring hospitality and compassion to the countless people who have come here in search of healing and comfort, whether in body or spirit. The recital of the prayer of the Church, the divine office, has given the Boarbank community focus and purpose in their endeavour to fulfil the command of love, laid down for us by Christ in today's gospel from John. Of all the commands, unstinting love towards one's neighbour makes the greatest demands. The constant stream of visitors and guests to Boarbank is a solid indication of how that unconditional love of Christ continues to be generously offered in our day, and equally how that command continues to be lived out.

We pay tribute this morning and pray for the past members of the community who have now entered into the fullness of Christ's love at that eternal banquet in the Kingdom. Their efforts and fruitful labours have ensured that Boarbank has become what it is: a place of welcome where the Master awaits, and is to be glimpsed through the life and Christian witness of the present community. We gladly make our own for Boarbank the opening words of our first reading: *And now bless the God of all, who in every way does great things.* Amen.

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