

## Church of Saint Mary of the Isle, Isle of Man, is granted Cathedral status

Pope Francis has granted cathedral status to the church of Saint Mary of the Isle based in Douglas in the Isle of Man. The announcement comes following Douglas being awarded city status as part of the late Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in June 2022.

The Church will be a co-cathedral for the Archdiocese of Liverpool alongside the Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King, based 80 miles away in Liverpool city centre and will be the first Catholic co-cathedral in the British Isles.

Co-cathedrals are rare in the Catholic Church, but exist when two dioceses, each with its own cathedral, are merged or when a single diocese spans two distinct civil jurisdictions. The Irish Sea separates the two cathedrals in the archdiocese.

Monsignor John Devine, parish priest of St Mary of the Isle, said of the announcement: "I am delighted that St Mary of the Isle has been granted cathedral status, it is wonderful news for Catholics across the island.

"It has been a year long process to get to this point. I was first approached by Douglas Borough Council who pointed out that cities have cathedrals, the island already has an Anglican cathedral in Peel on the west coast of the island, but they enquired whether it would be possible to elevate the church of Saint Mary of the Isle, Douglas, to the status of a cathedral.

"The Archbishop of Liverpool, the Most Rev Malcolm McMahon, on the advice of canon lawyers, petitioned the Holy Father; a request supported by both the Anglican Bishop of Sodor and Man, the chief executive of Douglas Council and the President of Tynwald."

Archbishop Malcolm McMahon, said: "It is with great joy that St Mary of the Isle has been granted cathedral status. The Isle of Man is a significant part of our archdiocese, it constitutes one third of its land mass and the island's Catholic community has increasing diversity with parishioners coming from many different parts of the world. It is fantastic that we can acknowledge this with the announcement of a co-cathedral – a status that is rare in the Catholic Church. It is something that everyone on the island will take great pride in."

Monsignor John Devine added: "It is not just an honour for Douglas, but it acknowledges the unique faith story of the Isle of Man.

"Christianity in the Isle of Man traces its roots to the time of St Patrick and St Maughold in the 5th century. But there is limited appreciation of the unique history and traditions of the Manx Church in the rest of the archdiocese. Similarly, few of the island's Catholics identify with Liverpool. However, rather than separating them further, the granting of co-cathedral status to St Mary's will raise consciousness in Liverpool to the riches of the Manx church. The permanent presence of the Archbishop's seat at St Mary's will also serve as a reminder to the people of the island that the Archbishop of Liverpool is their Archbishop, too."

Right Reverend Peter Eagles, Anglican Bishop of Sodor and Man added: 'It is a source of great gladness to me that we have such strong ecumenical relationships here on the Island. It has often occurred to me that that Saint Mary of the Isle has a dignity and spaciousness that is as appropriate for a cathedral as for a parish church and I fully support the bestowing of co-cathedral status.'

A cathedral is where the bishop of a diocese has his seat or *cathedra*. Plans are in hand for an official ceremony during which Archbishop Malcolm will formally take possession of his seat to mark the Church becoming a Cathedral.

**ENDS**

**Notes to editor:** The Isle of Man, as a crown dependency, is self-governing. Its parliament, Tynwald located opposite the Church, is the world's longest standing legislative assembly reaching back over 1000 years. The Island is not part of the UK. It lives off its own tax revenue and pays a subsidy to the UK for defence and foreign affairs. It has its own flag, national anthem, bank notes and postage stamps. Ruled in the past by Kings of Norway and then Scotland, the UK monarch is the Lord of Man rather than King Charles III.