

---

SAINT  
ANSELM  
COLLEGE



50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE  
DEDICATION OF THE ABBEY CHURCH

Fifty years! Fifty of those unique November days when the majestic laminated wooden beams of our Abbey Church emit a snapping sound in a way frightening to the uninitiated. Rising uninterrupted to eighty feet to meet and support the rounded roof system, the sixteen giant beams seem to know just when and how to adjust from the heat of summer, to ready themselves for their work through another long New Hampshire winter. Months later all is reversed, just as some engineer knew must happen, with the first truly warm day of springtime.

Two and a half score winters of strong winds, in sudden bursts lifting heavy slate roof tiles, the wind's bluster subsiding to the sound of those tiles slapping back into place. A menacing show of strength, unnerving to those within, yet endured by a building which knows it is equal to its tasks.

Nearly countless noontimes on bright sunny days when the light playing upon the stained-glass windows, presents a thousand images to the watchful observer, and stands ready to present a thousand more with each changing season. In like manner, differing shadows throughout the day project themselves upon the images of the stunning mosaics in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel to challenge the imagination of the viewer.

Five decades witnessing to innumerable torrential downpours drumming loudly on thousands of slates, so loudly, that the visitor two dozen feet away cannot hear twenty-five monks reciting their psalms with full-voice. True in winter as well, when heavy loads of ice and snow upon the roof, are set free by the rays of the sun, to roar loudly downwards under gravity's pull.

---

---

How graced we have been all these days and years since July of 1966 to love and experience this magnificent edifice, planned and executed by those who used so well their varied gifts, gifts bestowed on them by a generous Father. Gifts of mind, and skill, and imagination...gifts developed, and trained, and expanded, in such a way that, working with and for one another, those artisans and artists, toiling at their various crafts, brought forth this beautiful tribute to the Creator.

Yet, even as we give thanks for this magnificent structure, our faith turns our minds to the far more significant consideration of what takes place here. Beneath the cross of our Savior suspended by nearly invisible wires, the solid block of white Vermont marble proclaims this to be none other than the house of God.

And it is in this Church and to this altar that we bring all that we are, all that we hope to be: our loves, our sorrows, our struggles and disappointments, our joys and hopes. We come here for ourselves and for those we love, and indeed we pray here for the needs of our neighbors and communities, our nation and our world. To this altar have come young men offering their vows of stability and obedience and conversion, having freely chosen to give their lives to God under the Rule of Saint Benedict and under an abbot. Others have come here requesting the rites of initiation into our faith. Here have come young couples pledging their love to one another, as well as older couples celebrating and renewing a commitment already long-honored. To this place have been brought the mortal remains of monks and faculty members, administrators and friends, so many of whom, while they lived, found peace and drew inspiration from within these walls. Here too have come hundreds of students, often sitting silently in the very back of the Church listening to the monks singing Vesper psalms. Students praying for assistance to pass a feared exam, or to find peace after those difficult times that afflict us all: the breakup of a close relationship, a bad quarrel with family or friends, an inability to discern just the right path in any given circumstance, the illness, hardships, or death of one loved dearly. But they have also come to give thanks for friendships or betrothals, for acceptance to grad schools, or into vocational, service, and employment opportunities offering just what they had so intensely hoped for.

In this church have been uttered, both aloud and in the silence deep within the heart, the prayers of ten thousand souls. Some of those prayers offered in great distress or sorrow, yet with hope in God's promises. Other prayers spoken in great joy with gratitude for the blessings of a loving Father. And every prayer uttered in harmony with the words of King

---

---

Solomon from our first reading: “Lord God of Israel there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below: you keep your covenant of mercy with your servants who are faithful to you with their whole heart.....May your eyes watch night and day over this temple, the place where you have decreed you shall be honored; may you heed the prayer which I, your servant, offer in this place.”

We have heard it said many times that this Abbey Church is the heart and soul of Saint Anselm College. It is so true, for it is here in the Eucharist that we celebrate our salvation, here that we come to worship “the Christ, the Son of the living God.” This description of the Lord was first given us by Saint Peter in answer to Jesus’ question: “But who do you say that I am?”

This magnificent Abbey Church was dedicated fifty years ago by a community that accepted in faith that Christ Jesus himself is the capstone through whom the whole structure of the Church is held together. It is for us, fifty years later to summon our own response to Jesus’ inquiry: “But who do you say that I am?” Let us answer this fundamental question posed to today’s Saint Anselm College and Abbey by a life of prayer and a communion with the Lord so profound and all-encompassing that we in our time may form ourselves ever more completely into His Church.

We continue to build upon the eye-witness of the apostles who by their testimony regarding the life and death and resurrection of Jesus, have provided us a foundation upon which to establish our’ lives. Saint Paul described it all so succinctly: “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?” That is the foundation of our Church, that is the foundation that informs and guides and provides insight into all that is undertaken or accomplished in this College and in this monastery of Saint Anselm. May it be so today and always.

**Abbot Mark Cooper, O.S.B., ’71**  
**Abbot, Saint Anselm Abbey**  
**Chancellor, Saint Anselm College**  
**July 18, 2016**

---