

Archbishop Mäkinen: God is present, even where you least expect it

Archbishop **Kari Mäkinen** turned in his robe and other official insignias of office in his last mass as archbishop on 27 May 2018. Mäkinen retires from the position on 1 June 2018.

His final sermon was based on the Gospel of Matthew and the Great Commission (Matt 28:16–20) in particular. In the Great Commission, Jesus talks to his followers on a mountain in Galilee and sends them out to baptise and teach people. He also promises to be with them to the very end of age.

“When I look at the Christian Church, all the way from the mountain in Galilee to this very moment today, I see many things that witness the presence of God. But I also see just as many things that reinforce people’s experience of God being absent: hardness, cruelty, and people turning their backs on each other. Both are reality in the Church, a reality which we all must carry with us,” said Mäkinen.

The Archbishop also reminded us that when Jesus promised to be with us always, that promise was unconditional.

“He did not say that I will be with you if you follow my teachings precisely. No. Instead, he said that if you live by what you have learned from me, then, behold, you may recognise my presence, perhaps in surprise, for I am also where you least expect me to be, on the bypaths of life, amongst the insignificant, the worthless, the ignored.”

Archbishop Mäkinen recounted that, of his duties, he most valued reading the blessing on many different occasions.

“To me, refusing or denying the blessing due to a certain characteristic or fate would signal that I am turning my back on them and sending a message that God is absent. In turn, in reading the blessing I ask that God’s presence be made perceptible, encouraging and life-affirming.

“Being able to conclude my term as Archbishop with the blessing is therefore very important to me. By doing so, I commission you and myself to go out of that door and climb down the steps of the Cathedral, just as the disciples climbed down from the mountain in Galilee, and ask that we may feel the presence of Christ in our lives more than we do his absence.”

Gifted a stole

At the end of the mass, the Archbishop was robed in a stole entitled Prayer, a gift from the Archdiocese of Turku. Its colours reflect those of the Archbishop’s robe: white and green with a touch of purple – the colours of growth and life, of resurrection and sanctity, and of suffering. The stole is hand-embroidered silk and also includes the theme of the Lord’s Prayer.

"The stole depicts a tree of life. The surface of the tree shows different shades of green and displays an intricate interplay between light and shadow," explains the stole's designer **Silja van der Meer**.