WESTMINSTER ABBEY

Dedication of a Memorial to
Oscar Wilde
1854–1900

Poets’ Corner
Tuesday 14 February 1995
6 pm
ORDER OF SERVICE

All sit. The Dean gives

THE WELCOME

All remain seated for

THE READINGS

Dame Judi Dench DBE and Michael Denison CBE read part of the ‘Handbag Scene’ from The Importance of Being Earnest

Sir John Gielgud CH reads from the final part of De Profundis, the letter written to Lord Alfred Douglas when Wilde was in Reading Gaol, 1897

All stand. The Dean invites Merlin Holland, Oscar Wilde’s grandson, to switch on the lighting to reveal the Memorial Panel in the east window of Poets’ Corner

Mr Holland says:
May I ask you, Mr Dean, to receive into the safe custody of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster, here in Poets’ Corner, this Memorial in honour of Oscar Wilde.

The Dean says:
To the greater glory of God and in thankful memory of Oscar Wilde, we dedicate this Memorial: in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Flowers are placed below the window by Thelma Holland, Oscar Wilde’s daughter-in-law
ORDER OF SERVICE

All sit for

THE ADDRESS
given by Seamus Heaney

All remain seated
The Boys of the Westminster Abbey Choir sing:

THE ANTHEM

Who can express the noble acts of the Lord: or shew forth all his praise?

For thou, O Lord, art good and gracious and of great mercy unto them that call on thee.

All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship thee, O Lord: and shall glorify thy name.

For thou art good and doest wondrous things: for only thou art holy, thou only art the Lord.

Samuel Sebastian Wesley, 1810-76
Psalms 106:2 & 86:5, 9-10
OSCAR WILDE

All stand
The Reverend Paul Ferguson,
Precentor of Westminster Abbey, says:

THE PRAYERS:

Let us give thanks to God for the varied gifts he
gives to his people, and for the literary heritage
we enjoy, remembering especially the work of
Oscar Wilde; and let us pray for all who are involved
now in writing, in the theatre, and in scholarship.

O God, who by thy spirit in our hearts dost lead
us to desire thy perfection, to seek for truth, and
to rejoice in beauty: illuminate and inspire, we
beseech thee, all thinkers, writers, and artists;
that in whatsoever is true and pure and lovely,
thy name may be hallowed and thy kingdom come
on earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Let us remember the causes that were close to
Oscar Wilde's heart; his sense of social justice; his
championing of the equality of women in education
and the professions; his passion for integrity and
hatred of hypocrisy.

O God the King of righteousness, lead us, we pray
thee, in ways of justice and peace; inspire us to
break down all tyranny and oppression, to gain for
all people their due reward, and from all people
their due service; that each may live for all, and all
may care for each; in the name of Jesus Christ our
Lord. Amen. After William Temple
ORDER OF SERVICE

Almighty God, who hast sent the spirit of truth unto us to guide us into all truth; we beseech thee so to rule our lives by thy power that we may be truthful in word and deed and thought. Keep us, most merciful Father, with thy gracious protection, that no fear or hope may ever make us false in act or speech. Cast out from us whatsoever loveth or maketh a lie, and bring us all into the perfect freedom of thy truth; through Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord. Amen.   Brooke Foss Westcott

As Jesus taught his disciples, so we pray:

All say together:

Our Father, which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name;
Thy kingdom come;
Thy will be done in earth,
As it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive them that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
But deliver us from evil:
For thine is the kingdom,
The power and the glory,
For ever and ever. Amen.
All remain standing. The Dean gives

THE BLESSING

All remain standing
The Boys of the Westminster Abbey Choir sing:

Christ be with me. Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me,
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

Traditional Irish melody harmonized by Martin Neary,
words by St Patrick, circa 372-466
translated by Cecil Frances Alexander, 1818-95

Organ Music:

First movement from Sonata No. 3 in A
Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, 1809-47

The middle section of this movement incorporates the chorale Aus tiefer Noth (De profundis, or Out of the deep have I called unto thee)
I was a man who stood in symbolic relations
to the art and culture of my age.
The gods had given me almost everything.
I had genius, a distinguished name, high
social position, brilliancy, intellectual daring:
I made art a philosophy, and philosophy an art:
I altered the minds of men and the colours of
things: there was nothing I said or did that
did not make people wonder:
I awoke the imagination of my century so that
it created myth and legend around me:
I summed up all systems in a phrase, and all
existence in an epigram.
Along with these things, I had things that
were different.
I let myself be lured into long spells of senseless
and sensual ease.
I became the spendthrift of my own genius and
to waste an eternal youth gave me a curious joy.

*De Profundis*

Wickedness is a myth invented by good people
to account for the curious attractiveness of others.

*Phrases & Philosophies for the Use of the Young*