

# LIVERPOOL ARCHDIOCESAN CENTRE FOR EVANGELISATION

*From the Press Officer:*

*Peter Heneghan*

Tel (0151) 522 1007

Mobile: 07980 821273

Fax (0151) 522 1008

Email: [p.heneghan@rcaol.co.uk](mailto:p.heneghan@rcaol.co.uk)



Croxteth Drive

Sefton Park

Liverpool

L17 1AA

**Homily preached by The Most Reverend Patrick Kelly, Archbishop of Liverpool, at the Opening Celebrations of St Edmund Arrowsmith RC Centre for Learning, Whiston.**

It is good that the Mayor is with us today: first of all, his presence with that of representatives of civic life, especially in the field of education, does two things: it confirms their appreciation of the long tradition of Catholic Schools, originally made possible by massively generous giving by those who attended Mass week by week, without all of which there would be no Edmund Arrowsmith Learning Centre today. But they also acknowledge that at the core of Catholic Schools is a determination to offer a formation that will enable young people to reach out and be ever more committed to the common good of all.

But Mr Mayor, your presence offers something else as well: you are a native of the Queen's City, Lancaster. You will know its castle soaring above the River Lune; Lancaster, which means the camp on the Lune; and the Lune, is from the Latin word for moon recalls the rivers many crescent shaped, gracious bends, like a new moon.

But the castle there matters to us today for this reason: from that castle, then, as still today a prison, in the year 1628 Edmund Arrowsmith was taken to be executed because he was a Roman Catholic priest.

As he was taken to the place of execution, up on the hill where the Williamson Monument stands today, that thousands see every day from the M6, someone was watching from the window of his cell. It was another Lancashire man, John Southworth of Salmesbury, near Preston on the River Ribble. And he, fully aware, that for all of us death means going to meet God and God's assessment of our life, in the name of the Lord Jesus absolved Edmund from his sins; Edmund went to the barbaric execution serene and at peace.

John after that imprisonment was not executed; he found himself in London, serving especially the poorest of the poor who were dying in their hundreds because of an upsurge in the plague; he became known as the priest of the plague: in due course he was executed for being a priest; his body is honoured in Westminster Cathedral; you will all know Edmund's hand is honoured at St Oswald's in Ashton.

It is quite something to be part of a place named for Edmund Arrowsmith and formed and shaped by his story. It says this place is much wider, broader, more daring than skills, or any SATS exams, league tables we could invent. It says: here we face the challenge: Jesus shall be the centre of this centre of learning and my whole life. Here I will have the opportunity to

discover how inspiring is the story of those in Lancashire who were faithful to him before me and served God, Queen, King and country. Edmund Arrowsmith binds us into the Catholic that is the world wide, universal family. That is why, for example, Cafod comes naturally to us and so all here will be ready when a Haiti cries out for our affection and our generosity.

Mr Campbell, teachers and support staff, Governors, it is quite something to be entrusted with an enterprise named for Edmund Arrowsmith. I am certain I can assure you, Mr Mayor, the representatives of the Local Authority and the civic leaders: this centre of learning with such a patron will not disappoint you.

**Ends**  
**20 January 2010**