

## **PASTORAL LETTER**

### **Standing ready to live our faith**

Dear Sisters and Brothers in the Lord,

As we set out again on our Advent journey of faith, I want to thank you all in a very special way for your wonderful response to the Living Our Faith Campaign, which is now reaching its closing stages, though there are still a few parishes which will be starting in 2011. It has been an extraordinary time for the whole diocese and your overwhelmingly generous giving enables us to stand ready and confident as we prepare for the future.

By any reckoning, January 2008 was not the most auspicious time to launch a major fund-raising campaign and I did so with considerable misgivings. But two parishes – Hampshire Downs and Waterlooville – had pressing needs that could only be met by starting the campaign. There was need for a new pastoral centre in Winchester and Waterlooville had been waiting for their new church for nearly 40 years. They were eager to start and so the campaign was launched.

In the last two years, spearheaded by a number of pilot parishes, the campaign has gone from strength to strength. We now have £13.5 million raised or pledged for the future work of the diocese.

The objectives of the campaign have always been clear, both for the diocese and for the local communities, which were given the opportunity to address some of their own needs.

As a diocese, we must be much more active in the promotion and encouragement of vocations to the priesthood and the diaconate. Thanks to the campaign, we have been able to make a start by appointing and resourcing a Vocations Promoter with a team to work with him.

The implementation of the Pastoral Plan - *Go Out and Bear Fruit* - demands a far greater involvement of lay people, equipped and trained to take their rightful place in the pastoral and missionary life of the diocese. Thanks to the campaign, resources are becoming available to resource this.

There are diocesan needs to maintain existing buildings and plant and, as in the case of Waterlooville, assist in the building of new churches. The proceeds flowing from the campaign are enabling these things to happen.

Then, last but by no means least, there are the needs of your local communities to develop your strengths and facilities for the flourishing of your apostolic and pastoral life. Funds are now becoming available to make this possible.

The campaign has always focused on the future development and growth of the diocese and my message to you all was always to invite you to invest in that future. Your response has been staggering in its generosity - from the vast majority of parishes and from hundreds of you who form the communities of those parishes. Your enthusiasm and commitment to the future of the diocese has, for me, been deeply humbling and is something I will treasure for ever.

The campaign has been largely led by the laity and I am enormously grateful to the many who have given so freely and generously of their time and talents to achieve this fantastic result. But, I also want to say – and very clearly – that were it not for the selfless and untiring energy and encouragement of our priests and deacons, none of this could have happened. They too have been magnificent – not least in the generosity of their personal giving.

Funds can now be allocated to the various initiatives which have been proposed. That distribution is being carefully monitored by an Impact Committee, made up of priests and lay people who have particular skills in dealing with these matters.

For me, the Living Our Faith campaign has never been simply a question of raising money. I've seen it as an opportunity for us to demonstrate that we, as a diocesan community, are committed to our growth and our future. It has been about our pastoral engagement with the needs and the people of our time.

In the end, the Campaign has enabled us as the community of Christ's disciples in this diocese to strengthen our sense of *Communion* through the sharing of gifts and, thereby, enhance our response to *Mission* to which the Lord calls us.

From the depth of my heart, I thank you all for your generous and loving commitment to our diocese. You have been magnificent in your generosity and faith and our diocese is now better equipped than ever to *Go Out and Bear Fruit*. Thank you so much and may the Lord bless you all during this Advent Season.



*To be read and made available at all Masses on the weekend of November 27<sup>th</sup>/  
28<sup>th</sup> 2010.*