

### NEW EVANGELISATION: LISTENING TO THE SPIRIT WITHIN

This month in Rome something special is happening. The Pope has called a Synod of Bishops to discuss new evangelisation. To evangelise, from Gk. euangellizomai, to announce the Good News, means basically to spread the Faith: to teach the Truth, to promote authentic human values and to show to all the eternal life and love streaming from the Heart of Jesus. But the term new evangelisation, first used in 1983 by Pope John Paul II, is still a bit watery. It suggests a new push, with new ardour, new methods and new media. Essentially it refers to a two-way process of reaching-in and reaching-out. It means ourselves reaching in to a renewed love for Christ and his Church, with a deeper grasp of our Catholic Faith and its meaning for human living. But it also means reaching out to others to offer them the Good News, especially those who have already been baptised but who don't practice their faith or who are indifferent. It's this specificity that makes new evangelisation very relevant to us in the diocese of Portsmouth and to my own apostolic ministry as bishop. Let's return to this in a moment.

For YOU KNOW AMONG THE PAGANS THEIR SO-CALLED RULERS LORD IT OVER THEM. THIS IS NOT TO HAPPEN AMONG YOU Jesus tells us in today's Gospel. ANYONE WHO WANTS TO BE GREAT AMONG YOU MUST BE YOUR SERVANT. Jesus Christ is God the Son. He is the One through whom all things were made. He is the Logos directing organic evolution and human history. Yet when in the fullness of time He took flesh, He did not come as an autocrat throwing his weight around but as a servant. He came not to coerce but, through the Holy Spirit, to appeal to our innate religious sense, to the Truth within, to persuade us with gentle love and to elicit a free response. Indeed he was humbler yet even to the Cross, for THE SON OF MAN CAME NOT TO BE SERVED BUT TO SERVE AND TO GIVE HIS LIFE AS A RANSOM FOR MANY. This humble service, this appeal to Truth, this gentle persuasion with love, must also characterise us His disciples, and the whole Catholic Church. The Church exists in the world not to condemn it or to coerce it but to serve it, to propose the Gospel with humility, to appeal to our innate religious sense, to the truth and love the Spirit has sown within.

When he visited Cambridge in 1988 for an address, the then Cardinal Ratzinger was asked whether he believed in miracles: does God ever intervene directly to change the natural course of events? Ratzinger's answer was brilliant. He said the issue of miracles was complex, but essentially God works in the world by causing love. God works in the world by causing love: it's a brilliant answer! After all, love is the most powerful force on earth. It's able to liberate and transform, to heal and unify, even to overcome death itself. This explains the role of religion in human affairs: to serve the world by drawing love from God, by sharing love with others, by releasing it in history in every domain of human life. This is the deep meaning of new evangelisation. It would be tempting to devise a big programme of teaching and preaching; this would help. But since the Spirit is already at work in every human heart, what will count more is our own love and example, our humility and desire to serve, our helping people find God within to hear his call. God works in the world by causing love. Indeed, he does this now in this Mass as Christ lays down his life for us. Let us pray for the love, grace and truth we need to go from here to share with others, to help them to listen interiorly to what the Spirit is saying to them within.