

PROMISE OF FIDELITY

The reason I wanted to offer today a Votive Mass in honour of the Heart of Christ is because Jesus is our Master, and we are his disciples. Jesus Christ is God the Son, but he became human to be for us the Way, the Truth and the Life. And he has called you and me to follow him. More than that, he has called us friends. Even more, he has laid down his life for us! A MAN CAN HAVE NO GREATER LOVE THAN TO LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS. This extraordinary love of Jesus was revealed on Calvary, and is made true for us here and now on the altar. YOU ARE MY FRIENDS: YOU DID NOT CHOOSE ME; NO, I CHOSE YOU. We offer Mass in honour of the Heart of Christ because the Heart symbolises that extraordinary love and friendship of Jesus, inviting us personally and passionately to love Him in return: he who is My Lord, My God, My All. This is why I chose for the coat of arms, the motto In Corde Iesu.

As a Trustee, you are a special servant of Jesus and his Church here in the Diocese of Portsmouth, and as the new bishop I wanted to mark the beginning of my apostolic ministry by offering Mass for you and with you. In this Mass, we have so much to thank God for: all the progress made under Bishop Crispian and the work done together. Thank you for all you do as Trustees, and for all you have done. But having a new bishop brings a sense of freshness and new beginnings. This is why we also have much to pray for. So in this Mass, let us once again entrust our diocese and all that we do to God's providence, calling on the intercession of our patrons, Mary Immaculate and St. Edmund. We have exciting challenges ahead and so rightly we call on God's help, remembering always, it's not our diocese or our Church, but His.

The 8 weeks since the episcopal ordination seems an eternity! The ordination has taken place during the Year of Faith marking the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council and the 20th anniversary of the Catechism, that wonderful compendium of Church teaching. This is why, following the request of the Holy Father, I wanted to invite us all as Trustees to renew our faith, and to deepen our faith, by making a public act or witness of faith. We'll do this in a moment by reciting together the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed and by adding to the end of it, a simple Promise of Fidelity: that we will persevere in faith and preserve our communion with the Church. I also wanted to ask everyone to undertake an Oath of Confidentiality so we can have real confidence and trust in one another, as we share responsibility for the work ahead. Again, in advance, I thank you for this undertaking, and as a sign of this promise, I invite you to kiss the Word of God in the Gospel.

THE LORD SAYS THIS: I AM GOING TO LOOK AFTER MY FLOCK MYSELF AND KEEP ALL OF IT IN VIEW. May that promise of the Lord once made through Prophet Ezekiel come true for us in the weeks ahead. Indeed, in this Mass, as Jesus our Saviour lays down his life for us, let us pray for every grace and blessing on our work. Let us pray that the Lord, who has begun all this good work in us, will bring it to completion. Amen.