

JESUS IN THE HOLY EUCHARIST = GOD WITH US

I'm happy to be with you this weekend for this Pastoral Visitation. I thank Fr. Daniel and all of you for your warm welcome and for all you do here in this North Hinksey parish to witness to the Catholic Faith. It's 3½ years since the Holy Father appointed me Bishop of Portsmouth, and I ask your prayers. I originally come from Altrincham, Cheshire and this is a part of the world I don't know well at all. I need my Sat-Nav! It's a great help for getting round the diocese, which stretches from here in south Oxford down to the Channel islands.

I'm delighted to be here this weekend the feast of Corpus Christi, when we praise Jesus for the amazing gift of Himself in the Holy Eucharist. His Body and Blood is the greatest treasure on earth. At the Last Supper, Jesus instituted the Eucharist so that the power of His Death and Resurrection might be available across space-time to everyone. This is why the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Church's life. It's the centre of everything. When we gaze on Jesus in the Bl. Sacrament we cannot help but exclaim with the Psalmist: *What great nation is there that has its God as close as this?* Everything the Angel promised the Virgin Mary has now come true: *His name will be Emmanuel, a name which means God-is-with-us.*

When I was a youngster, my father taught me a habit I've never lost. In the evening, he'd often take us out for a ride in the car, but on the way back, we'd always swing by church for a quick visit to say a prayer. I remember well the sanctuary lamp flickering in the dark. The habit of visiting church to pray to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is one that's lasted me a lifetime, and I commend it to you and your children. Indeed, I want to ask you to help Fr. Daniel to keep this church open, so that everyone can come here. Never lock Christ away! Don't prevent people coming to meet Him! Keep the church open so people can visit the Lord! Indeed, come often yourselves to adore Him, to spend time with Him, to pray to Him for all your needs. St. John Paul II put it like this: *How wonderful to spend time with Jesus, to lie close to his breast like John the Beloved Disciple, to feel in our hearts the infinite love of his Heart, and to draw from him strength, consolation and support.*

I said before how useful is a Sat-Nav. Every human being has an inbuilt sat-nav, a spiritual compass, a religious sense enabling one to recognise the Holy, the Divine Presence, the Lord. When we enter church, our first priority should be to locate the Tabernacle and to genuflect, greeting Jesus and adoring Him. We show our reverence and love for Him by keeping silence, not by chatting. For, to quote again St. John Paul, *the thought of the Eucharist should fill us with profound amazement and gratitude.* We should be utterly amazed, astounded, astonished at the mystery, wonder and awe of Who it is, really and truly present on our Altar: *the Word through Whom all things were made.* In this Mass today Corpus Christi, let us thank God for the Gift of His Son's abiding presence. Let us ask Him to reveal Himself to us, to renew our religious sense, to rekindle our Eucharistic amazement. And this week, why not promise to put a few moments aside to pay a visit to this church to be with Jesus, to listen to Him, to pray for all your needs and the needs of the world. I always say that when we come to adore Him, He too adores us, His creation. He restores, renews and refashions us with the Love that pours out from His Heart.