

S070215: Day with Mary

(Cathedral)

WELCOME

I welcome you to this Day with Mary here at St. John's Cathedral, Portsmouth. I welcome all of you from the Cathedral parish, from the parishes of Portsmouth and those of you who have come from further afield. We've come to spend this day with the Blessed Virgin Mary, to ask her to bring us closer to Jesus Her Son, to offer up Holy Mass, to spend time with Jesus in the Holy Eucharist and to meditate on the Lord's birth, life, death and resurrection in the Rosary. We are also here to support one another with our prayers, to pray for the needs of the Church and the world, and to pray for our families and our friends. So let us begin this wonderful Day by calling on Mary's help in the prayers set before us in the booklet.

STAR OF THE NEW EVANGELISATION

Over the last decades, the Church has been calling all of us, clergy and laity, to the work of new evangelisation (NE), an evangelisation Pope John Paul said, *new in its ardour, new in its methods and new in its expression*. Evangelisation means spreading the Good News, an activity that's been going on since the Early Church, but one that's always two-way. It's about ourselves being evangelised and ourselves evangelising others. We live in the 21C; it's exciting yet daunting, and so if we are to communicate effectively the Gospel message we need to find new means and new methods. We need the Holy Spirit to fill us with great creativity. But above all we need new ardour, a much deeper faith, a transforming encounter with the Person of Christ, with a new sense of being His disciple in the Church. Essentially NE is about the centrality of Christ and a new desire to invite others into friendship with Him.

I'm very happy to celebrate this Mass with you as we begin this Day with Mary. When just over two years ago I became the eighth Bishop of Portsmouth, I selected the motto *In Corde Iesu*, In the Heart of Jesus. For Jesus of Nazareth, Son of God and Son of Mary, is the centre of our Catholic faith and the only way to that TGLHH&F for which we all long. You may have seen my Coat of Arms? It shows a white hart, drinking from the waters of Life, as in Psalm 42: *Like the deer that yearns for running streams so my soul is yearning for you my God*. But in the top left-hand corner is a bright yellow star, like the one the Magi followed from a distant country, the light of faith that led them to the Christ Child. That Star represents Mary - yes, Star of the Sea, for Portsmouth is a maritime diocese and Immaculate Mary is our Patron. But even more, with its seven points, seven for sorrow and seven for joy, the Star represents Mary, Star of the NE, the one who actively leads each one of us to happiness in Christ her Son. That's our prayer today.

I'm delighted that during this Day you'll be praying the Rosary, a truly Christ-centred prayer. Not only do we honour Jesus by a bow of the head in every *Hail Mary*, but each Mystery we contemplate comes straight from the Gospel: the joy of His birth, the light of his life and teachings, the sorrow of His Passion and Death, and the glory of his resurrection and its consequences. I love the Rosary, especially saying it together with a friend or when driving in the car. The new ardour of the NE is all about prayer, an inner experience of God. We need to put all our resources into helping people to pray, to find God, to experience God's love, to develop a personal-passionate friendship with Him. In this we face a huge challenge. The total population of our Diocese of Portsmouth is 3M, of which maybe 200,000 are Catholics, of which 40,000 practice. We have 100 priests and so NE is essentially your work as lay people. You are the missionary disciples and Jesus is asking you to reach the 160,000 non-practising and the 2.8M others!

Mary, Star of the New Evangelisation, pray for us. In this Mass, as we hear God's Word and from Christ's Sacrifice receive the Food of Eternal Life, let us pray for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit on ourselves, our families and friends, on our Diocese and on our world. Today, God is being sidelined. We need a stronger faith, a personal relationship with Jesus, a life of virtue, service of the poor and a real assent to the Church and her teachings. In this Mass, may Mary's prayers win for us new ardour, enabling us to exclaim with her: *My soul glorifies the Lord.*