



A PASTORAL LETTER FROM THE BISHOP
to be read aloud
in all churches and chapels of the Diocese of Portsmouth on
29th June 2014, the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul

THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS AND THE NEW EVANGELISATION

Dear Followers of Christ,

First of all, Happy Feastday! In venerating the martyr-apostles Peter and Paul, we celebrate the Mystery of the Church.¹ Today, let us pray for the Holy Father, for the Church throughout the world and for the unity of all Christians. We remember persecuted Christians, especially those in Nigeria, Iraq, Syria and Sudan. Christianity, they say, is now the world's most persecuted religion; this century has already produced more martyrs than any before.² Yet today's feast is linked indivisibly with the feast we celebrated on Friday, the Sacred Heart of Jesus.³ The Church springs from the Heart of Jesus; she is founded on Him, He, the Head and we, the members.⁴ Indeed, at this time of the year, and as Pope Pius XII encouraged, it is customary to worship the Heart of Christ, bruised by our offences, yet burning with love and mercy for us.⁵ We should try to make reparation for human sins, which offend God, damage self and others, and obscure the Church's Divine beauty, making it harder for people to find their way to Christ's Truth, Goodness and Love.

This brings me to my theme. For over the last decades, the Church has been calling us to make an epic shift in attitude, to focus less on the Church of the Lord and more on the Lord of the Church. Instead of being inward looking, seeking to change or to conserve the *status quo*, or becoming a moaning minnie, we need to recall the joyful words of Paul VI that the Church exists to evangelise.⁶ As disciples, our primary task is to live like Jesus, to reach out to others in love, and to transform our culture with the Gospel. Today, this is not easy. In Britain, Catholics are no longer martyred, yet some suffer reputational damage and our beliefs are increasingly marginalised.⁷ A new secular culture is in the ascendant, and this is why a new evangelisation is required, an evangelisation, in the words of St. John Paul II, "new in its ardour, new in its methods and new in its expression."⁸ Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium*

captures brilliantly the shift of attitude needed: "I dream of a missionary option, .. a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelisation of today's world, rather than for her self-preservation."⁹

The word 'evangelisation' puts some people off; to others, it is unfamiliar, its meaning watery. Evangelisation is a modern word – it means 'to announce the Good News' – yet its origins go back to Jesus in the scriptures, Who told us to go and "make disciples of all nations; baptise them .. and teach them to observe the commands I gave you."¹⁰ Evangelisation is two-way: it is about you and I being changed by Christ, and it is about you and I proposing Christ to others. This two-way process represents the beating Heart of Jesus, for in essence Christianity is not a programme, not a set of doctrines, not a moral code, but a Person.¹¹ Once we grasp this, once we encounter Jesus Christ, once we realise He loves us and wants us to be His disciple, then everything else in our Catholic Faith and Tradition follows on.¹² This spiritual foundation, powered by the Holy Spirit, generates the new ardour, fire and urgency that creates new methods and new expressions. It is an ardour enkindled and renewed by meeting Jesus in Holy Mass, in Eucharistic Adoration, and in the Gospels, which record His personality, words and deeds.¹³

Let me add another point. New evangelisation means reaching out to others, person to person, to help them find in Christ, the Son of God and the Perfect Human, an answer to their needs. But it also means, as Pope Francis urges, seeking to baptise the culture in which we live, to reform our social and economic structures with the values of Christ, and to live a simpler life-style in service of the poor and needy.¹⁴ This is extremely challenging, for it makes us review everything we do, even the way our parishes think and act. As priests, we have been trained to be 'chaplains to the Catholic community' and as people, we have been trained to expect a certain service-level. Yet new evangelisation suggests that in future, priests will need to become mission-directors and the people, lay apostles, witnessing to Christ with courage and clarity at work, at home or wherever, however costly and counter-cultural.¹⁵

Over the last months, I have been visiting our diocesan schools and parishes, getting to know everyone, and I rejoice to say that in the Diocese of Portsmouth, the new evangelisation is well underway.¹⁶ Indeed, I thank God for you all, the clergy and people of our wonderful diocese! I thank God for all you do, for your faith and practice, for your prayers and support. I thank you for your magnificent response to the *Living Our Faith* appeal.¹⁷ I thank you for all you are doing in this Year of Faith in Action. I also thank you for responding to the *Called and Gifted Program*, which seeks to clarify the charisms, gifts and talents the Lord has given us for mission. Recently, to assist the new evangelisation, we announced some changes to the Pastoral Areas, grouping them into regional deaneries; this is something you will hear more about over the summer. Meanwhile, in order to engage in new methods and new expressions, the Diocese is currently making a decisive shift into new media. Indeed, I invite you, if you have not done so already, to subscribe on the diocesan website to our free, weekly, E-News magazine, with which, in the autumn, the re-launched *Portsmouth People* will be correlated.

Let me end with a prayer. I was taught this prayer at school. I now commend it to you: "Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, I implore the grace to love you daily more and more".¹⁸ Please say this prayer three times every morning, to unite yourself afresh with Christ. New evangelisation is about a deeper friendship with Him and a keener sense of what it means to be His disciple. I pray that you will experience, understand, grasp and practice this for yourself over the weeks ahead. But in the meantime, thank you for listening. May Mary Immaculate, St. Edmund and the Winchester Martyrs pray for you. I wish you a happy summer, with some time for blessed rest and relaxation.

In Corde Iesu
+ Philip
Bishop of Portsmouth.

¹ Cf. the Preface appointed for today's feast in *The Roman Missal*.

² See Cardinal George Pell "Religious Freedom," the Annual Lecture on Religious Freedom at the University of Notre Dame (Australia) School of Law, 22nd August 2013: available online at sydneycatholic.org/pdf/UNDAREligiousFreedomLecture22Aug13-amended.pdf (June 2014). See also the work of Aid to the Church in Need: www.acnuk.org

³ "For raised up high on the Cross, [Christ] gave himself up for us with a wonderful love and poured out blood and water from His pierced side, the wellspring of the Church's Sacraments, so that, won over to the open heart of the Saviour, all might draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation" *Roman Missal: Preface of The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus*.

⁴ Col 1: 18; cf. 1 Cor 12: 12-30

⁵ See Pius XII Encyclical Letter *Haurietis Aquas* (1956) available online at www.vatican.va (June 2014). See also *The Litany of the Sacred Heart of Jesus* (online or in traditional prayer books). This litany is thought to have originated in Marseilles in the early 18th century and was approved for public use by Pope Leo XIII in 1899. I would encourage everyone to pray it regularly, perhaps taking two or three of its invocations each day for meditation.

⁶ "The Church exists in order to evangelise, that is, to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace" Paul VI *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 14 available online at www.vatican.va (June 2014)

⁷ See Bishop Philip Egan "Irrelevant! Should Christianity still have a Voice in the Public Square?" a lecture given at Kings College, London, on 6th March 2014: available online on the diocesan website.

⁸ See John Paul II "The Task of the Latin American Bishop", Address to CELAM, 9th March 1983; English translation in *Origins* 12 (4 March 1983) 659-62.

⁹ Francis *Evangelii Gaudium. The Joy of the Gospel* (London, CTS: 2013) 27.

¹⁰ Mt 28: 19

¹¹ "We are ... not seduced by the naive expectation that, faced with the great challenges of our time, we shall find some magic formula. No, we shall not be saved by a formula but by a Person, and by the assurance he gives us: I am with you! It is not therefore a matter of inventing a 'new programme'" John Paul II *Novo Millennio Ineunte* 29, available online at www.vatican.va (June 2014).

¹² This is the essential message of *Dei Verbum*, the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, which carefully maintains the personal self-revelation of God in the Person, words and deeds of Jesus Christ, along with the doctrinal definitions and moral imperatives derived from this (the deposit of revelation). See *Dei Verbum* 2-6: cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 50-53, 65.

¹³ Some might be tempted to dismiss new evangelisation as the latest programme or pastoral 'flash in the pan'. Yet in truth, this is different; it is a new mission-mindedness that is permeating the universal Church and all that she is doing. We have been used to people coming to us; now we are must go out to them. New evangelisation was central to the mission of Pope Benedict XVI, who in 2010 established the Pontifical Council for the New Evangelisation. It is also central to the mission

of Pope Francis, who said on one occasion that when “the Church does not come out of herself to evangelise, she becomes self-referential and then gets sick. The evils that, over time, happen in ecclesial institutions have their root in self-referentiality and a kind of theological narcissism”: see en.radiovaticana.va/storico/2013/03/27/bergoglios_intervention_a_diagnosis_of_the_problems_in_the_church/en1-677269 (June 2014).

¹⁴ See Francis *Evangelii Gaudium* 176f.

¹⁵ The challenge of new evangelisation is very evident on the ground in our parishes. Vast numbers of Catholics do not practice their faith or they drift away. For many, Baptism, First Holy Communion, Confirmation have become mere rites of passage. The Gospel has been preached and catechesis given, yet many appear indifferent or unresponsive. How do we reach them? A lot of people have been ‘sacramentalised,’ but have they been evangelised? Some convert to other religions, because, they say, their spiritual needs were not met in the Catholic Church. Others remain connected to the Church, through baptisms and funerals, or through their children attending a Catholic school, but do not enjoy a life-changing relationship with Christ in the Holy Eucharist. This new context is the reason why a new type of evangelisation is required. The usual methods are not working. See S. Weddell *Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus* (Huntington IN, Our Sunday Visitor: 2012) 15-47

¹⁶ People everywhere across the diocese are telling me of their desire to reach out to others with the joy of the Gospel. I think too of such evangelistic endeavours as *Nightfever* in Gosport, *Life on the Rock* youth ministry in Jersey, Jeff Cavins’s *The Bible Timeline* currently running in many parishes, and the *Encountering Christ* day for secondary school students in Southampton.

¹⁷ The target for *Living Our Faith* was £9 million. Your pledges amounted to £13.1 million, of which we have already received £11.4 million. Just as a reminder, the *Living Our Faith* fund can only be used for four purposes: (1) formation of the laity; (2) care and support of the clergy; (3) renewing parish facilities; and (4) parish projects. See diocesan website.

¹⁸ I have been unable to trace the origins of this prayer. Here is another favourite you might say too, a prayer ascribed to St. Richard of Chichester (d. 1253): “Thanks be to Thee, my Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits Thou hast given me, □ for all the pains and insults Thou hast borne for me. □ O most merciful Redeemer, Friend and Brother, □ may I know Thee more clearly, □ love Thee more dearly, □ and follow Thee more nearly, day by day. □ Amen.”