

150th Anniversary of the Catholic Truth Society

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To have eyes for the good things of the Lord is to live by faith, to see life with the eyes of faith

Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster

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Given at the Mass for the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Catholic Truth Society on 19th June 2018 at Westminster Cathedral

It is a great pleasure for me to celebrate with you, today, the 150th anniversary of the Catholic Truth Society (CTS). I thank the CTS for their kind invitation, and in particular, I thank all of you who have come to the cathedral, this afternoon, for your presence.

When we look back over the history of the Church in this country over the past couple of centuries, we see how God has blessed us richly with so many men and women of great stature and real faith. He has also sent them to us at the right time. The theological acumen of Blessed John Henry Newman was perfect for the ecclesiastical and scholarly climate in which he lived; the oratorical and literary flourish of Ronald Knox sat well in the earlier years of the twentieth century. Cardinal Herbert Vaughan was another churchman well-suited to the age in which he lived. He was, as we know, of a rather shy and nervous disposition; he may not have thrived in the Church of the twenty-first century. But his life, coinciding almost exactly with the reign of Queen Victoria, continues to show how generosity of spirit, openness to the call of God, personal holiness and sacrifice, allowed God to work great things through him.

I suppose that many people would say that Vaughan's greatest legacy is this great cathedral. They may not be wrong. It is indeed a building of faith, an ongoing inspiration to all those who glimpse in its marble and mosaic, or hear in its music or in its stillness, a whisper of the voice of God. But the beauty of Westminster Cathedral finds a counterpart in Vaughan's other great gift to the Church, the Catholic Truth Society.

A hundred and fifty years after its foundation, there must be few people brought up as Catholics in England and Wales who have not heard of the CTS. Memories of the stand at the back of the church, often faithfully tended by parishioners week in, week out, are fresh to us. I am sure that many CTS parish representatives are here today, and I thank you for your important ministry. The Simple Prayer Book, which sold as many as two million copies in its first twenty-five years and countless millions more since, has helped many of us with the language and quality of our prayer from our earliest days. As publishers to the Holy See since 1964, the CTS has played a pivotal role in communicating the teaching of the

Magisterium. More recently still, in 2011, the new translation of the Missal was introduced; and so it is from liturgical books prepared and printed by the CTS that the prayers of the Mass, that great pinnacle of our prayer, are proclaimed to this day.

Things might have been very different. Just four years after he had founded the CTS in 1868, Father Vaughan was made Bishop of Salford. The weight and breadth of episcopal responsibilities diverted his attention from the Society, and it faltered. Thank God, a relaunch in 1884 put it back on the path to success: an exhortation to perseverance if ever there was one!

The two legacies of Cardinal Vaughan, cathedral and Society, fit together well. The CTS motto 'God's truth, beautifully told' hints at why. That Westminster Cathedral is beautiful is beyond question, but its beauty is purposeful: it is there to lead us towards Jesus Christ, who is our Truth. Those whose hearts are stirred by beauty may start to ask themselves questions about the source of that beauty and wish to inform themselves more deeply about it. The work of the CTS is there to provide a practical response to that desire.

In a similar way, the truth which the CTS seeks to disseminate in its publications is not some sort of compendium of sterile facts; it is a truth that, for the believer, engages and transforms. It points the way to Christ our Truth, who shows us the path of life, and how to live it in its fullness. It echoes for us the invitation we heard in the First Reading to 'turn our hearts towards him so that we may follow all his ways and keep the commandments'. And those who take time to understand the truths of our faith will be able to appreciate all the more deeply its beauty, expressed not least in this cathedral, through the eyes of that faith.

Truth and beauty are two qualities of our being that traditionally go together with a third: goodness. Listen again to those words of Jesus from today's Gospel: 'I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit, fruit that will last... what I command you is to love one another'. Our Lord is reminding us that in our Christian life we must always have a care for the other. Without that care, theological writing can be reduced to intellectual jousting. With this firmly in mind, theology is evangelisation. Box-tenders and parish 'reps' of the CTS down the ages were and are agents of evangelisation. Those who write the pamphlets did so and do so, in the end, to kindle a flame of love for the things of God, to whet the appetite for more.

All of these themes, of truth, beauty and goodness; of history, evangelisation, and service, are brought together in the most powerful of ways in this cathedral, in the hanging crucifix. When Pope Benedict celebrated Mass here in 2010, he said, 'The visitor to this cathedral cannot fail to be struck by the great crucifix dominating the nave.... The Lord's outstretched arms seem to embrace this entire church, lifting up to the Father all the ranks of the faithful who gather around the altar of the Eucharistic sacrifice and share in its fruits. The crucified Lord stands above and before us as the source of our life and salvation.' It is our privilege, and our solemn duty, to ensure that all our writings, all our efforts at evangelisation, seek to proclaim that message of life and salvation and encourage many to share in that life in communion with Christ's holy Church.

'Always be thankful.' So says St Paul to the Corinthians in the Second Reading. Today we have so much for which to be thankful. And, as we look to the past 150 years of the Catholic Truth Society with gratitude, it is our fervent, and confident, prayer that the truth to

which the Society has borne such steadfast witness in past years will, in the years to come, bring many to a deeper appreciation of the beauties of our Catholic faith, and inspire them to live that beauty in the goodness of their lives. Amen.

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400th Anniversary of Vincentian Charism

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Given at the Mass celebrating the 400th Anniversary of the Vincentian Charism, at St Charles Church, Hull, on Saturday 10th June 2017.

At the heart of our celebration today is thanksgiving to God for the Vincentian charism that has been lived out for four hundred years this year. This is, therefore, a wonderful moment and one that is truly to be celebrated. But, please note, that these four hundred years do not take us back to the date of the birth of Vincent, nor to the date of his ordination as a priest. No! They take us back to a story of a conversion. For the first thirty or so years of his life, Vincent was happy to go along, rather anonymously, with the world as he found it. He was a Christian, of course, but not particularly heroic; he was a priest too, ordained in 1600, but probably rather an unexceptional one. There is hope for us all!

Today, then, we are not celebrating human comfort and relative mediocrity; on this four-hundredth anniversary, we give thanks for all the gifts the Vincentian family has brought to the Church and to the world. That it has done so is down to the conversion St Vincent underwent, particularly in the year 1617. As we know, it was in that year, in Chatillon in France, that Vincent became aware of the desperate situation of a poor family, dying of hunger. He preached in the parish church about addressing their needs: the response was overwhelming, and the family was saved. 'The poor are dying of hunger and are condemned', he famously said. The Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, the Congregation of the Mission, the Society of St Vincent de Paul, including the 'Mini-Vinnies', and many other branches of the Vincentian family too, have all done so much over four centuries to alleviate the sort of conditions that made Vincent first say this.

It can sometimes be difficult to describe what is at the heart of a particular charism. For the Vincentian family, it's maybe a little easier. Two words immediately come to mind: charity and mission. There are those who see charity as almost a pejorative term: we all know people, particularly of our parents' generation, who struggled on in straightened circumstances because they didn't want 'other people's charity'. In the life of St Vincent de Paul we see charity at its purest. Vincent was someone who could have been very comfortable; but he looked outside himself to poor families, to prisoners, to those on the galleys, to whom he ministered as a chaplain for many years. His service was not given as a sort of lofty benevolence: he was determined that he and his followers must not appear as 'great lords'; instead, he identified with those who had nothing, and suffered with them.

But charity alone was not enough for Vincent, at least, not charity as many people would see it. He understood that charity is one of the theological virtues, alongside faith and hope. These are the virtues that relate directly to God, and dispose us to live in a relationship with the Trinity. Pope Francis understands this too. That is why he has famously and rightly warned that the Church is so much more than a 'compassionate non-governmental organisation'. No, the charity of the Vincentian family, like the charitable efforts of the Church as a whole, have their source in Jesus Christ, and look to him for their fruitfulness. That, he, is what makes them distinctive and effective. 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me' (Matt 25:35). These words from St Matthew's Gospel lie at the heart of the Vincentian charism, and of these 400th anniversary celebrations. Only a few words later, Christ reminds us that 'in as much as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me' (Matt 25:40). These are words we shall sing later at Mass today: they are words we do well to take to heart.

Vincentian charity is rooted in and motivated by faith in Christ. That is why it is appropriate that it is complemented so essentially by mission. Indeed, St Vincent de Paul was particularly gifted at fusing charity and mission harmoniously. He once said to the Daughters of Charity that 'you must bring to the poor sick two kinds of food: corporal and spiritual' (SV IX, 593). This prescient saying is as relevant today as it was in the seventeenth century. Modern technology and travel may have changed how we seek to 'go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News' (Matt 28:19), but the imperative to do so remains. We need to be alive to the imperative of seeing mission as necessitating long-distance travel far less now than in the past; my neighbour in Hull, or in London, may need to be introduced, or reintroduced, to the Gospel with greater urgency than many in remoter parts of the world. Pope Francis has famously spoken of the need for us to be 'missionary disciples' and I make no apology for repeating his words today. They are key to the vitality of our faith in Jesus Christ in the twenty-first century; and, if we seek to respond to them with generosity, we can be sure that Christ will richly bless our efforts.

All of us face times when those efforts at mission or at charity seem very tame. There can be any number of reasons to feel discouraged: spiritual malaise, community difficulties, times when the gulf between what the world offers and the demands of our faith seems simply too large. These are times when the attractiveness of St Vincent can come to our aid. I have a particular affinity with him, of course; my mother's decision to name me Vincent had much to do with St Vincent de Paul. But all of us can find something in St Vincent's life to sustain us. If we feel trapped, in a situation of sin, or hopelessness, we can look to St Vincent: he knew slavery and imprisonment, and that time in the early years of the 1600s was not wasted. If we feel discouraged in our vocation, feeling perhaps that the secular world has more to offer than the Kingdom of God, we can look to St Vincent: his lukewarm early years provided a backdrop for his later pastoral charity and missionary work that were so valued and so effective. If we feel overwhelmed by the enormity of a task entrusted to us, we might imagine how daunting his appointment as chaplain to the galleys in 1622 must have felt. And then we might consider how much good came of it.

When Jesus went to the synagogue at Nazareth, the passage he chose to proclaim was from the prophet Isaiah: 'He sent me to bring the good news to the poor, tell prisoners they are prisoners no more' (Luke 4:8, cf Is:61:1-2). Early in his life, Vincent might have shied

away from these words. By the time he died in 1660 he had taken them to heart in a way that few others had, and had encouraged countless others to do the same. They remain both his legacy to us, and his challenge, a challenge that the next words of Isaiah continue to offer us: 'Go, tell everyone the news that the Kingdom of God has come!'

May this exhortation, quoted by Jesus and enacted with such faithfulness by St Vincent de Paul, guide us and inspire us as the next 400 years of the Vincentian charism are born. Amen.

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Being a Missionary Disciple

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Given at First Vespers of St Cuthbert Mayne in the Diocese of Plymouth on 28th November 2017.

There are words of St Paul that often gnaw away at my conscience, especially on occasions as splendid as this. St Paul cries out: 'Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel' (1 Cor 9:16). His warning troubles me, as I am sure it does many bishops, priests and deacons, as we prepare our homilies and speeches, or sometimes skimp doing so. So a somewhat troubled Cardinal stands before you this evening, knowing that there is a high standard to be met.

But it's not just the ordained who should listen to St Paul's warning. Let me spread my unease more widely! The great teaching document of the Second Vatican Council on the nature and tasks of the Church, the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, quotes these very same words of St Paul in its second chapter, on the 'People of God'. The chapter tells us that 'the obligation of spreading the faith is imposed on every disciple of Christ, according to his state' (LG17). Evangelisation, in other words, is not an optional extra for any Christian person; it is integral to the living out of our faith. All of us are facing the same challenge: Woe to us all if we do not preach the Gospel!

And that, of course, poses an obvious question. How? How can I bring others to know and love Our Lord Jesus Christ? How can I do this in a culture that is so closed to many things about our faith, seeing faith simply as a problem to be solved and not as a great resource to be discovered afresh?

There are many ways to answer that question! Pope Francis is so helpful when he calls us to that task. He presents it as a positive challenge reminding us first of all of its joy before addressing the problems to be overcome. He writes: 'The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew' (*Evangelii Gaudium* 1). It is on this basis that he gives us our positive self-definition, the phrase by which we are to be known.

His title for each one of us is that we are to be 'missionary disciples'. This is his development for our own times of the vision of the Church as the 'People of God'. This is the way in which he unfolds that earlier definition, bringing something dynamic and

outward-going to our very self-understanding. He is also reassuring, if we immediately feel inadequate to the task. If we worry that our knowledge of the faith is too patchy to be of much use in bringing others to Christ, he says, 'anyone who has experienced God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love' (EG120).

So if we are to be missionary disciples, an experience of the love of God is an essential pre-requisite. Our love of God cannot flourish if we do not pray. Prayer, the raising of the mind and heart to God, is central to our encounter with him. As we spend time in prayer, we open our hearts to his presence, and our minds to what he asks of us. Personal prayer, built into the fabric of the day, keeps us constantly alive to the reality that Jesus accompanies us always, through good times and bad. Prayer together reminds us that, in baptism, we are bound together in this new identity, into the Body of Christ, and called to holiness in union with Jesus and each other. So public prayer nourishes the Church, nurturing us in this new calling. Indeed, through its beauty and evocative silence, the prayer of the Church can itself become a means of spreading the Good News, especially when there is a thoughtful welcome offered to the visitor.

Prayer opens us to the reality that missionary disciples are agents of God in their work: it is God who begins the good work, and brings it to fulfilment.

Talk of 'agents' might take us back to earlier times when Catholics were agents in more senses than one, to the days when holding fast to the faith was a clandestine and risky business. Today's celebration is a service of Vespers of St Cuthbert Mayne. Though he lived long before the phrase became well-known, he was the embodiment of the missionary disciple. Indeed, he was the first priest who was trained at the seminary that Cardinal William Allen had founded at Douai in France in 1568, to suffer and die for the faith on the English mission. He was executed on 30 November 1577, 440 years ago. He is rightly remembered for the courage and fidelity he showed and the witness he gave.

Just one year ago, at World Youth Day in 2016, Pope Francis called on young people to be the signs and carriers, the agents, of hope in our world. Then he gave this instruction: If you want to be people of hope, then go home and talk to your grandparents. 'A young person who cannot remember', he said, 'is not hope for the future'.

There is much we can learn from our 'grandparents' in faith, not least St Cuthbert Mayne. For him, and for all martyrs, their faith was not something they had as an accident of birth; nor was it a cultural or social phenomenon. It was simply a relationship, a friendship, with Christ. In St Cuthbert Mayne's case, it led him to let go of the esteem and security of a fellowship at Oxford University, and to embrace instead a path that he knew well could lead to social ignominy and a horrible death. He could not, and would not, have done this without such a deep and special friendship with Jesus Christ, cultivated and sustained in prayer.

For St Cuthbert Mayne, prayer and action were inseparable, even to the moment of his execution. For us, as missionary disciples, it is so important that prayer does not exist in a bubble. We should constantly guard against being 'functional atheists', our friendship with God playing no part in our daily lives and choices beyond the hour a week we spend at Mass.

As we seek to avoid this sort of mindset, as we struggle with the calling to be missionary disciples, we do well to remember three qualities that, traditionally, have helped many to know God better. These are truth, beauty, and goodness. Our search for truth will, inevitably, lead us to a desire to become more familiar with the truths of our faith: 'we want to have better training, a deepening love, and a clearer witness to the Gospel' (EG121). This pathway of truth is also becoming more urgent in our society, in which we now sense a vacuum of shared meaning, the absence of any common narrative by which we make sense and give shape to our lives. We are becoming weary of a shallow consensus that tells us just to do our own thing, especially as we see how intolerant such a stance has become when challenged by reasoned disagreement or alternative conviction.

The pathway of beauty has an increasingly powerful role to play in opening our hearts, and those of our neighbour, to the reality of the transcendent, that ultimate horizon which we sense, and against which we play out our lives. This is the reason why we should take great care about the beauty and holiness of our public worship. We know well how a great work of art or piece of music can take us out of ourselves, and lift us beyond our daily preoccupations. Our worship must aim to do that too, if it is to be effective in fostering our relationship with the Lord.

As for goodness, I am told that nearly 100,000 volunteer hours are offered by parishioners across this diocese each year, in areas such as visiting the sick, helping the elderly, and caring for the church. Such dedication is strong evidence of missionary discipleship. No doubt there is more to be done. But this is an ancient and powerful witness and one which is still very eloquent today: an argument and an invitation beyond words, yet, I trust, containing within it a ready explanation for the hope which lies at its heart. Indeed, a lived faith is a living faith.

This evening, as we praise God for the gift of our faith in his Son and for the enduring example of so many, especially St Cuthbert Mayne, I offer some more words of Pope Francis, characteristically direct and challenging. Speaking of the need for us to be missionary disciples, he says 'So what are we waiting for?' (EG120). What indeed? 'Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!' 'So what are we waiting for?' Go out to the whole world, and proclaim the Good News!

Amen.

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Brentwood Centenary

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Given at the Mass to celebrate the centenary of the Diocese of Brentwood at the Cathedral of St Mary and St Helen on 22 March 2017

Two weeks ago, ten thousand young Catholics from across England and Wales were gathered at Wembley for Flame 17, an opportunity to pray, to learn and to celebrate their faith. While in their company, I remembered the stirring appeal of Pope Francis to young people: 'If you want to be people of hope, then go home and talk to your grandparents.' He added: 'Ask them questions because they have the memory of history, the experience of living, and this is a great gift for you that will help you in your life's journey.'

Today, as we celebrate the centenary of the Diocese of Brentwood, we look to our grandparents in faith. We look to them with gratitude for all that they have done in establishing this diocese, and in nurturing the faith of Catholics in East London and in Essex.

Now I don't count myself among the grandparents, although the deep links between the Dioceses of Westminster and Brentwood could be cast in that mould. What I do treasure are my personal links with this diocese, not least the Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Alan, such a memorable occasion. But my link goes back much further, as the first titular cathedral I was given was the Chapel of St Cedd, at Bradwell-on-Sea, a place much treasured in this diocese and from where St Cedd first brought the Gospel to these parts.

Then, more importantly, I think of your first bishop, Bishop Bernard Ward and his fondness for railways. It was from that love of the rail network that your cathedral is here in Brentwood and that Brentwood is the very name of your diocese. So I smiled when I received a letter from Bishop Alan, in preparation for coming to this Mass, which told me which train to catch!

Every one of Bishop Ward's successors had their particular qualities: it fell to Bishop Beck and his successor Bishop Wall to rebuild schools and churches after the war; Bishop Casey is remembered for his immense fatherly kindness, while Bishop Thomas McMahon brought so many gifts to the diocese, not least in building this cathedral in which we celebrate Mass this evening.

These are just a very few of the memories that provide the context for our celebration

today. They must not be left in the history books. Indeed, as Pope Francis reminds us, they can and must help us in our responsibility for the continued flourishing of the Catholic faith in this part of the world.

Isn't it lovely, then, that the readings chosen for this Mass have a certain emphasis on the future.

The First Reading, from the prophet Ezekiel, looks to what the Lord will do. 'I am going to look after my flock... I shall look for the lost one, bring back the stray, bandage the wounded and make the weak strong.' We are to cooperate in that work, lending our hands and our hearts to its achievement, knowing it is always the work of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the great commission given by Christ to the Apostles in the Gospel to 'go and make disciples of all nations' is only possible because he also makes this promise: 'Know that I am with you always, yes, to the end of time.'

This Gospel command gives the basis for another great theme of Pope Francis: that we are always to think of ourselves, and to live, as 'missionary disciples'. The Second Reading gives us clues about how we are to go out and do it. St Paul reminds us that not everyone is the best of teachers; not everyone has an instantly attractive personality; not everyone is good with the sick. But, each of us does have a particular giftedness, not granted to another. Discerning what that may be and how best it is put to service is essential to a healthy Church. We are, thank God, rich in our diversity in so many ways. But, if we are truly to flourish, that diversity must always be placed at the service of the fundamental unity of the Church and of her mission, and never remain a cause of separateness within our community.

In all our efforts to further that mission, faith finds a most eloquent expression when it is grounded in the real circumstances of life. Pope Francis recently reminded us of this when he said, 'You learn to do good with concrete actions, not with words. With deeds... For this reason Jesus... rebukes this ruling class of the people of Israel, because "they talk and don't act"'. Then he added that without this concrete action there can be no true conversion. Action is the test of our faith.

Again, our efforts for the future can take inspiration from the memory of the past, of our grandparents. Their extraordinary efforts at renewal in the face of the devastating bombing of the Second World War are among the more tangible pieces of evidence of concreteness in faith, sometimes even literally. And there are so many others, perhaps now faded into history but still part of the fabric of this diocesan family. I think of the goodness of priests who went the extra mile to support their parishioners in times of sadness or tragedy. In the sight of God, and in many memories, this is never forgotten. I think of the ministry of so many religious women, including my own Auntie Peg, Sister Thomas More of the Chigwell Sisters (Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary), who played such a role in education and in service of the poor. This is never forgotten. The practice of faith and charity sustained by faithful Catholics in the face of daily challenges of many a sort: this too is never forgotten. We must heed, with the utmost seriousness, this call to the practical witness to faith if we are to succeed in our efforts at conversion, at spreading the Good News, for the next hundred years.

That is not to say, of course, that prayer and attentiveness to the Word of God become an optional extra. Practicality and prayer are two sides of the same coin: if one spreads faith, the other nurtures faith within us. Together they help us to see our responsibilities within a context that is so vast as to be eternal. We sang at the start of Mass, 'Praise to the Holiest in the height, and in the depths be praise; in all his words, most wonderful, most sure in all his ways!' As we seek to hold together the faith we profess in word and the faith we express in action, we strive always to mirror something of the surety and wonder of Christ himself and always to the praise of our Heavenly Father.

The praise of God, for which we are gathered in the present, is rooted in thankfulness for the past and hope for the future. In a hundred years, an entirely new group of people will, please God, be gathered here for the bicentenary of the Diocese of Brentwood. Today we pray that we, and our children and grandchildren in faith, may be worthy successors of those whose memory we celebrate, and on whose witness we undertake to build.

May God bless richly this Diocese of Brentwood both now and in the years to come.

Amen.

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Called to Serve the Sick

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Pastoral Letter for Eighth Sunday of Ordinary Time, 26th February 2017

One of the great gifts of Pope Francis to the Church has been the Jubilee Year of Mercy, which concluded last November. During that Year, we entered so much more deeply into an understanding and acceptance of the mercy of God towards each of us, no matter the circumstances of our life. We also refreshed the flow between the mercy we receive from the Lord and the mercy we extend to those around us through the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

Now, for the next six months, I ask you all to focus on one particular corporal work of mercy: caring for the sick. From now until the close of our Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes at the end of July, I hope that we can look again at how we respond to those in our midst who are sick, in body or in mind, and how we support them and their families. The care we extend will embrace not only sick members of our own family and our relatives, but also those in our neighbourhood, those in hospital, and those who are burdened with chronic illness or painful conditions. This special season, with the title 'Called to Serve the Sick', is being led by Bishop Paul McAleenan. I thank him for all his work in this.

Caring for the sick is a daily, practical expression of the mercy we have first received from God. This means that our caring for the sick arises from our faith in God and is most fully completed when it takes its shape from that faith. The care we offer, then, is shot through with a loving trust that this sickness, these special needs, which a person is carrying, are capable of bringing that person closer to God, and of helping others through their own pain. This is what we mean by 'redemptive power of suffering'. I am sure you know the words of that wonderful hymn which says: 'Nearer my God to thee, nearer to thee. E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me, nearer my God to thee.'

The first reading of our Mass today expressed the feelings experienced by many in their illness:

'The Lord has abandoned me. The Lord has forgotten me'. Indeed this is often how we feel. But the promise contained in that reading from Isaiah assured us that God's love is stronger even than a mother's love. God promises: 'I will never forget you.' And God looks to us to give practical expression to that promise. God wants us to say to those for whom we care:

'I, too, in God's name, will never forget you!' This is what St Paul means when he says that we have been 'entrusted with the mysteries of God' and prays that we may be found worthy of that trust.

My mother had a special way of approaching the presence of illness and suffering in her life. She often remarked that the traditional saying 'God never gives a cross without the back to bear it' was wrong. She insisted that it ought to say 'God never gives a cross without the backs to bear it' for it is only by standing shoulder to shoulder that can we carry the crosses which come our way from the Lord. Indeed, quite often it is the shoulders of the sick persons themselves who help us to carry the cross together. Often it is the sick who bless us with their courage, tenacious faith and enduring hope.

On Wednesday this week, we begin the time of Lent in which we try to follow more closely Our Blessed Lord, especially in the sufferings he bore for us. This longer season of 'Called to Serve the Sick', can start by our looking again, during Lent, at how we care for those who are going through a time of illness, or indeed whose lives are coming to an end. It asks us to see beyond all the necessary practical help and medical care to the very soul of the person, seeing them as a precious daughter or son of our Heavenly Father, making their way to him, coming closer, step-by-step, with Christ himself. As Cardinal Hume said: 'The journey to heaven always goes over the hill of Calvary.' We can make that journey together.

Please do look out for the steps and events of this season. Please do make a renewed effort to remember the sick and the dying in your prayers. Please do not turn your back on them, simply handing them over to professional care, important though that care is. The mystery of the gift of life in each one of us becomes more precious at such times. Let us treasure and serve that mystery, for it is the mystery of God himself.

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CCEE Symposium Barcelona

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To have eyes for the good things of the Lord is to live by faith, to see life with the eyes of faith

Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster

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Given at Mass on 28 March 2017, at the CCEE Symposium on the accompaniment of young people at the Seminario Conciliar de Barcelona

The first reading in our Mass this evening is one of the most beautiful and evocative passages in the Bible. These words of Ezekiel flow throughout the Biblical texts. They are echoed in the words of Jesus as he proclaims: 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me. Let him come and drink!' (Jn 7.37). They appear in the Book of Revelation where we read this: 'Then the angel showed me the river of life, rising from the throne of God and of the Lamb and flowing crystal-clear down the middle of the city street. On either side of the river were the trees of life' (Rev 22.1-2).

Ezekiel's vision of an issue of water flowing from the Temple came to him on a day when the Temple of Jerusalem had been destroyed. It is, then, a vision of great hope, a vision of a life-giving stream, that widens and deepens until it makes wholesome even the sea itself. On the banks of the great river stand trees that are not only fruitful but whose leaves bring about the healing of the people.

The Gospel of John gives us the interpretation of this vision: 'As scripture says: From his breast shall flow fountains of living water. He was speaking of the Spirit which those who believed in him were to receive' (Jn 7.38-39). Thus we can readily see that the side of the Temple, of which Ezekiel speaks, is indeed the side of Jesus, from which flowed forth blood and water (Jn 19.34), two of the three witnesses about which John speaks in his First Letter. The third and invisible witness is the Holy Spirit, poured out afresh from the wounds of Christ (1 Jn 5.7-8).

I have long been fascinated by a detail to be found in most images of Christ crucified. I am no doctor, but I know that the heart is situated on the left side of our chest. Yet in all classical crucifixes, the wound through which the heart of Jesus is pierced is to be seen on the right hand side of his body. It is the visual expression of this same text: that the saving waters, the gift of the Holy Spirit, flow from the right side of the Holy Temple, which is his Body.

From the very first moments of his conception, which we have just celebrated, the life of Jesus is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is as if he is being filled to overflowing with that presence and power. Today's Gospel is an example. It is in the power of that Holy Spirit

that Jesus cures the sick man and, in doing so, begins the process whereby he identifies himself with the new Temple. The person of Jesus is like a jar, filled to the brim with the Holy Spirit. It is only when this alabaster jar is shattered, during his Passion, that its content and fragrance fills the whole house. And that house is, in the first place, the Church.

Indeed, we can say that the last breath of Jesus is the first breath of the Church. As he breathes his last, the Church breathes in the new life of the Holy Spirit that is to flow from her, giving healing and life to all who come to those waters. These words are engraved above the baptismal font at the Lateran Basilica: 'This is the wellspring that cleansed the whole world, having its source in the wound of Christ' (*Fons hic est qui totum diluit orbem sumens de Christi vulnere principium*).

Today, as we strive to live in the Church by that same Spirit, there is a solemn warning that we do well to heed. It was spoken by the future Patriarch Ignatius IV of the Greek Orthodox Church:

'Without the Holy Spirit, God is far away, Christ stays in the past, the Gospel is a dead letter, the Church simply an organisation, authority is a matter of domination, mission is a matter of propaganda, the liturgy is no more than an evocation, Christian living a slave morality. But in the Holy Spirit, the cosmos is resurrected and groans with the birth pangs of the Kingdom, the risen Christ is there, the Gospel is the power of life, the Church shows forth the power of the Trinity, authority is a liberating service, mission is a Pentecost, the liturgy is both memorial and anticipation, and human action is deified.'

(Bishop Ignatius Hazim, Address to the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Uppsala, 1968).

As we ponder and explore the theme of this Symposium, accompanying young people, we remember that our task is always to help them discern the will of God for them, the greatness to which our loving Father is summoning them. As Pope Benedict said, we are made not for comfort, but for greatness. Our stance, then, is always one of being open to the Holy Spirit, of wanting, in humble obedience, to discern the promptings of that Spirit and to respond, step by step, to that challenging call.

The Spirit is first poured out in the act of creation in which is first written the basic grammar of our human nature. And it is, as I said this afternoon, a grammar of gift. We who receive life as a gift, find the fulfilment of our lives when we give our lives as a gift, a gift made in faithfulness and love. Yet we are also fallen creatures. Left to ourselves we lose our way in the multitude of options and attractions which confront us. We stand in need, then, of receiving the drama of our salvation, and that drama is so vividly described in that stream of water, flowing from the right side of the Temple, becoming a great torrent of love, which brings healing and growth to all who are caught in its embrace. The salvation offered to us in Jesus is for the healing of our nature so that we may indeed attain the fulfilment for which we have been made: the fulfilment that comes with the utter, unrestricted gift of ourselves.

This is the heart of every vocation. Today we strive to understand the dynamic of the Holy Spirit at work in young lives, and to understand our part in serving that dynamic. At this moment, during this Mass, we open ourselves entirely to that same Spirit, here as we stand

at the foot of the Cross and partake afresh in the outpouring of the Spirit from the wounds of Jesus, held before us in this Sacrifice.

We pray again the words of the ancient prayer:

Anima Christi, sanctifica me,

Corpus Christi, salva me,

Sanguis Christi, inebria me,

Aqua lateris Christi, lava me.

Soul of my Saviour sanctify my breast,

Body of Christ be thou my saving guest,

Blood of my Saviour bathe me in thy tide,

Wash me with water flowing from thy side.

Amen.

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Chrism Mass 2017 - Diocese of Westminster

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Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster

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Chrism Mass 2017

Given at the Chrism Mass at Westminster Cathedral on Tuesday, 11th April 2017.

With this ceremony of the Chrism Mass, we are entering the holiest days of the Church's year. Here we stand at the threshold, ready to step gratefully into the mystery of faith, the vast landscape of the great plan of God for our human family. In these next few days, we shall journey with Jesus, through the crowded streets of Jerusalem, to his last supper, his arrest and trials, his suffering and death, coming finally to that glorious moment of his rising from the dead! Never before or since, in all human history, has a man risen from the dead by a power that was properly his own. Only here, in this event, do we grasp the true meaning of our lives, of the whole of creation!

And, as we stand on this threshold, we know that all of this takes place out of the aching love of God, who longs that his people find their way home, to him, with their wounds bandaged up, their burdens laid down, their sins forgiven and a shout of exaltation on their lips. This love of the Father has no limits. It is for everyone. Its landscape embraces our whole world.

And, in this great work, God our loving Father calls for our help, our cooperation, the effort of each one of us.

Today there is a powerful sign that we all have a part, many parts, to play. It is the sign of the oil of Chrism, blessed during this ceremony, and flowing out from here across the diocese and so into the whole world through the means of the Church's work and ministry.

Chrism is the olive oil, mixed with spices, that is to be blessed for us today. Chrism is a sign of the fruitfulness of God's creation, for in God's plan of salvation every created thing has a part to play. Even the dove, which brought the olive branch to Noah announcing the end of the Flood, has its part in this great adventure.

The prayers we say will tell us that Chrism plays a vital part in the story of all those who, before us, have been called to serve God: Aaron, Moses, David, Samuel, and the whole line of kings, prophets and priests.

Then, in the fullness of time, Chrism has become the name of Jesus, for he is called Christ, the Anointed One. As the very fullness of God, he is anointed, for he is the fulfilment of that immense, all-embracing plan of God for the freedom and joy of all people. He is our Saviour.

Like Jesus, the Christ, the Anointed One, we too have been anointed with Chrism: in Baptism, in Confirmation and, for my brother priests and me, in Holy Ordination to the Priesthood. All of us are to be part of this great work of God, bringing every aspect of creation to the fulfillment for which God holds it in being. Today, on this great day of Chrism, we all renew in our hearts our willingness to be workers for Christ, participants in his project, dedicating again our desires, our wills, our hearts, our efforts to this great mission, the only enterprise on earth that bears fruit in eternal profit!

There are two phrases, which describe this enterprise, which I wish to put before you all today.

The first is this: the world is God's construction site! Everything that goes on in this world which is not against the will of God, but rather which flows from all the fine and noble instincts written into every human heart, contributes to this construction. Every moment, every event in our lives and in the lives of others, all those ups and downs, joys and great sorrows can be part of God's work of construction. We are all part of this work. Use your imagination! God's construction site needs the clever engineers and patient bricklayers, and skillful scaffolders, visionary architects, bookkeepers, foremen, investors. I could go on! All are needed!

But we, who are among these workers, each with our different skills, we are also anointed. We are the priests of this construction site and our common task is to dedicate this work each day to its true Boss, its ultimate Client. Our task is to bring our highest understanding of the eternal destiny of this enterprise to bear on its daily decisions, in whatever part of that enterprise we are involved. We are also to be there with the consoling words of our Father when accidents occur, when injustices are to be confronted, when injuries happen. We are the special presence of Jesus in this great construction site of God.

Then there is a second phrase: the world is God's dance floor! I heard it at the great youth event, Flame '17. God's dance floor! It must be so, because Chrism is called the oil of gladness, the anointing of a joyful family. It is the oil of celebration. Think of the parable of the prodigal son: the Father embraces his lost boy and says: 'Let the party begin!'

Yes, the world is God's dance floor and whether we like ballroom or disco there is a part in this dance for us all. Yes, it is our calling to be the promoters of the dance, to go and find the shy and the clumsy of foot and encourage them to join in. Yes, it's true! We are anointed with the oil of gladness. Yes, the dance! Yes, please do let your imagination run riot!

And, we priests have received, as it were, a double dose of this oil of gladness, an additional anointing with Chrism, which is our special delight, our treasured calling. Today we priests rejoice afresh in this vocation, in the part we are given in this world, in this construction site of God, and on his dance floor, although at this point we may indeed need a very vivid imagination!

As we stand at this threshold of Holy Week, we remember that the work of Salvation, costing nothing less than the precious body and blood of Christ himself, is done for the sake of the entire world. That is the focus of our mission: not our own safety or salvation, but that of every person, in every time and in every place. We will recall that this is all the work of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit poured out so powerfully from the wounds of Christ himself. It is this Holy Spirit who prompts every good initiative and effort in this great construction site. It is the Holy Spirit who prompts every exuberant and truly joyful move on the dance floor of our hearts, in our families and in our world, in which God himself is the choreographer, the bandmaster and the leading dancer!

My brother priests, we have such a precious role to play, as spelled out in the words of the promises we are about take. Always, in all these duties, we are to be particularly sensitive and responsive to the promptings of that Holy Spirit, at work in unexpected ways and places, yet always recognisable in her fruits. Pope Francis asks us insistently to be companions of the people entrusted to us and to be the discerners of the promptings of the Holy Spirit among them. Let that call, and the dedication and generosity of time it requires of us, the prayerfulness of life it presupposes within each of us, be powerfully in our hearts as I ask you now to rise and renew, in this great assembly, the promises of your priesthood.

Amen.

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Chrism Mass 2018 - Diocese of Westminster

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Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster

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Chrism Mass 2018

Given at the Chrism Mass on 27 March 2018 at Westminster Cathedral

This Chrism Mass is my favourite moment in our year. It is so important and special. There is something very wonderful about this full Cathedral, about the feeling of a gathered diocese, a diocesan family. And I am always deeply touched by the support and love for the priests that is so evident today. Thank you all for being here.

Now here is a question for you. Have you ever been to the source of a river? To the spot where the water seeps up from the earth and wriggles its way down a hill or mountain side? I have, just once. As I recall it was a desolate spot, high up, just below a peak, desolate and a bit boggy. But I could identify a persistent flow of water, coming up through the ground and quickly being joined by other tiny streams. I stood there, amazed that this tiny stream was to grow, gradually at first but with increasing speed and power, into a strong river, flowing inevitably into the sea.

On that occasion, I thought of the image of a stream, used by the Prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 47:8-12) and the Book of Revelation (Revelation 22:1-2). I remembered the description we are given there of the 'river of life', flowing from 'the right side of the Temple', 'down into the Arabah and to the sea; and flowing into the sea it makes its waters wholesome'. I remembered the description of that river that gave wondrous growth and fruitfulness to the trees that grew on its banks and 'whose leaves were medicinal for the people.' Indeed, in the prophecy of Ezekiel we read: 'wherever the water goes it brings health and life teems wherever the river flows' (Ezekiel 47:11).

Today, in this ceremony, we gather at the source of that stream, the river of God's grace. From its source, this river flows into our world, bringing the promise of healing, of health, of life in its fullness. Here too we see that the river flows from the right side of the Temple, that is, from the wound in the side of the body of Jesus, the new and everlasting Temple. Through his death on the cross, through his wounds, his pierced side, this great gift of

grace, the transforming action of the Holy Spirit, flows into our troubled world and into our troubled hearts. This is a place at which to stop, to be filled with wonder, to be filled with joy.

Let us look more closely at the source of this river of grace. Our liturgy is made up of actions and words. On their own they are indeed quite remarkable. But it is not our actions and words on their own that matter. Indeed some find them rather clumsy! We have to always see beyond these actions and words, not be constrained by them. We must see with the eyes of faith and listen with the ears of a disciple. Then we can know that our words and actions, whether simple or of great dignity, are the means that God chooses to use to bring about this river of grace. Grace flows from here not because of our words alone, but because in this liturgy, by the power of the Holy Spirit, there is a great coming together of the human and the divine that produces a unique synergy, a radically different source of power and change.

The human and the divine come together in a single unity, each in their fullness, solely in the person of Jesus Christ, he who alone is truly God and truly man. Only Our Blessed Lord can bring about our salvation, the forgiveness of our sins and the fulfilling of our potential as children of our Heavenly Father, to be with him forever. This salvation can be achieved only through the power of God, which is fully present in Jesus. It can be ours only because Jesus is fully one of us and carries our human nature with him through his victory. If he were not God, the victory is beyond his power; if he were not fully human, the victory is beyond our reach. But he is truly God and truly man and, truly, he is our salvation.

It is from his side that this water of new life flows. It flows and is celebrated most fully in the sacraments of the Church. Many of those sacraments are signalled and made effective in the use of the oils, which we bless today: Baptism, Confirmation, Ordination of priest and bishop, the Sacrament of the Sick. Today this oil flows, as it were, from the very side of Christ into every parish, every home, every family and into every place of illness.

In each of these Sacraments, the use of this oil is accompanied by the words of the ordained minister, priest or bishop. Together, word and action unlock for us the saving power of God, enabling the 'water of life' to flow into our lives, bringing its healing and renewing in us the fruitfulness of the Holy Spirit. This is the cause of our joy in our priests, so vividly expressed in this Mass.

My brother priests, ours is an immensely privileged way of life. Despite our failings and sinfulness, so many people give us their trust and look to us for encouragement as well as to the grace of the Sacraments. This is the challenge to which we priests must rise: to be worthy of that trust, to be gracious in our ministry, never to take for granted the position we are given but always to strive to serve, not just the parish or particular ministry entrusted to us, but also the greater good of the whole.

I thank God for every pair of anointed hands, which will administer these oils in the year ahead. I thank God for the heart of every priest in this Diocese, a heart which has been dedicated to this service of grace and which today seeks to be renewed in its purity of intention and largeness of compassion.

I thank every one of you today. Thank you for your innate goodness, for your effort when

tired and for your patience when over-stretched, not least by me and my immediate colleagues. Thank you for sustaining your clear identity of a priest of Jesus Christ, witnessing to him, through your faithfulness and perseverance. I thank God for you all.

Now we must continue with this great liturgy. But first, I ask all priests present to stand and be ready to renew the promises of your ordination day, sustained, buoyed up by your faithful people, who, in their turn, promise you their prayers today. And please do not forget to pray for me.

X Cardinal Vincent Nichols
Archbishop of Westminster

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Deceased Clergy Mass 2017

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Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster

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Given at the Requiem Mass for deceased clergy of the diocese in Westminster Cathedral on 10th November 2017.

There is one thing I ask of the Lord,
For this I long,
To live in the house of the Lord,
All the days of my life,
To savour the sweetness of the Lord,
To behold his temple.

These words from Psalm 26 are to be found on the inside page of our Mass booklet for this Requiem Mass, immediately below the names of our brother priests for whom we pray this evening: Canon John McDonald; Canon Charles Acton; Canon Peter Gilbert; Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor; Mgr Augustine Hoey; Fr John (Bruce) Elliott; Fr Norman Brown; and to those names I want to add one more, that of Seán O'Toole who also died in these last twelve months.

The words of this Psalm capture vividly that ancient longing for fulfilment, written deep into our nature and so vividly experienced in our lives. It is the fulfilling of this longing that is so wondrously made possible in the mystery and grace of Jesus Christ. This is the faith in which our brothers died. This is the faith in which we pray for them. This is the faith by which we want to live each day, starting today and continuing until the Lord calls us, just as he has called them.

The first reading we have heard encourages us to look at each other and to see in each other the good things of the Lord. That is not as easy as it sounds, for we tend, rather, to look at each other and see the flaws that each of us bears and the failures that characterise our stories. May I even suggest, for I know it of myself, that we may well dismiss or minimise the 'good things of the Lord' to be seen in each other, darkened as we are, so readily, by the shadow of jealousy. Yet these gifts of the Lord are distributed, as St Paul tells us, 'just as he chooses.' And each of those for whom we pray this evening was uniquely gifted.

It may be that we can be more clear-eyed in appreciating these gifts when we look at the way in which our brothers died. Then, we can learn from what we see.

Here are my impressions, my vote of thanks, for each of them.

I think of John McDonald in the last years, months and days of his life. They were powerfully marked by his practice of prayer. Often I would find him in the chapel in St Anne's, quietly praying before the Blessed Sacrament. That is how he died, too, prayerfully and peacefully.

Charles Acton: such an open heart and mind. For him there was joy to be found in so many places and activities, especially in family and friends and in the clarity of mind, he both enjoyed and sought to foster in his students. He died with humility and, I am sure, with that longing to see the mystery he had faithfully contemplated throughout his life.

Peter Gilbert, whom I knew less well, for me, in his life and in his death, was a man of faithful friendship, received and given. So he lived, thus he died, in the embrace of life-long friends who loved his priesthood and his person.

Augustine Hoey! What can I say about Augustine? Somehow, he had the knack of holding death at bay! He knew how to delay that day, pacing himself, preserving energy by focusing on what was truly essential.

John Elliott: I learned that Bishop Nicholas recently asked John to write about the joy of dying! What a project and what an example! He wrote: 'Moving on is simple; it's what we leave behind that is hard.'

Norman Brown: he lived with such kindness for so many; he died with a resilient hope very much filling his heart.

And, Cardinal Cormac: to the end, Cormac displayed that lightness of spirit, with a ready humour and great warmth. What I admired, too, was the simplicity and humility of his heart in those days. He said to me that he no longer was concerned about what the obituaries might say; and he made sure that his life savings were distributed to those whom he had served, especially the priests of the diocese. In that he reminded me so much of his predecessor, Cardinal Basil Hume OSB, who had said that it was of first importance that he left this world empty-handed, with no wealth stored away and his award, the Order of Merit, put to one side, and certainly not placed upon his coffin. Leave this world empty-handed, a beggar before God, ready to be filled with his glory, for we know that nothing can compare to that and that it is for such glory that we have from the first been created.

There are so many gifts for us here, gifts for which we thank God and gifts from which we are to learn.

It is said, and with some truth, that as a man lives so a man dies. So if we too want a good and holy death, then let us start now. Let us ask ourselves again, what is it that we can learn from the lives and deaths of those for whom we pray this evening?

Who, or what, is it in whom I put my trust? Where does carefully accumulated wealth, whether large or very small, fit into my sense of security? How can I repay the Lord who has been so generous to me?

Or, to whose judgement do I give power over my life? Whose opinion really matters to me? Is that concern rightly focused? There is only one whose judgement really matters and before whom I need to have only a simple, loving humility.

Faithful friendship, steadfast prayer, opened heartedness to people and to learning: are these the marks of my living that they may fashion my dying?

Kindness towards the lowly and closeness to the Lord: These will make his summons a call of joy. These too are offered to us for our imitation.

What rich testimony we are given by those for whom we pray. Let us not be reticent to act on their example and depend on their fraternity, even now, for they are a great support for us all.

In the Gospel of St Luke, which was also read at the Memorial Mass for Cardinal Cormac, we heard the passage of the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24.13-16, 28-35) so beloved of Pope Francis. He has often pointed out that Jesus comes to walk with the disciples even as they are walking away from Jerusalem, away from the place which represents the presence of God among us, the Church. He knows that they are moving away because disappointment has taken hold of their hearts, the sense of being let down by those they had most trusted. Jesus, please note, does not summon them back to Jerusalem. He walks with them, step-by-step, in that same direction. In doing so, he shows them his heart, opening their hearts to a new realisation of the as-yet hidden truth of redemption. Only then do they willingly turn back, and go with haste to the community of disciples that they had left behind.

This is so important. The call to conversion can only be offered heart-to-heart. How often we see Jesus offering his most demanding teaching, the highest moral precepts, to those he loves and who are already learning to love him. The stranger cannot understand. A journey must first be made.

These are the pathways of discipleship. It is our task to walk with those entrusted to our care, even when they are heading away. As we walk, we try to speak heart-to-heart, sensing their sadness, maybe their anger and disappointment, taking one step at a time.

This is the discernment that lies at the heart of our ministry, a ministry that has as its horizon the gateway of heaven, knowing that the journey can only be made step by step, seeing what it is that the Lord is asking of each person, knowing full well the limitations of their freedom as well as the deepest desires of their hearts.

I have a lovely memory of a kitchen conversation, many years ago now, with Fr Séamus Fullam, in Grahame Park. When I arrived, he was trying to fill in a 'parish handover' document. He was stuck at the question which asked him to list his key priorities in the parish. 'What do I put there?' he said to me. 'What are you trying to achieve here, Séamus?' I replied. 'Well', he said, 'to get people to heaven, I suppose.' 'Then please write that down'. And that was the answer he gave, a good and patient priest who understood the human heart and the journey of faith we all must take. And his answer, of course, represents a bottom line that is not easy to measure!

Today, we pray earnestly that our brethren have already entered those heavenly gates,

welcomed by the Lord, in his mercy and goodness. We trust that they now truly behold his temple, savouring in its fullness the sweetness of the Lord. For our part, we strive to glimpse that greatness, having a foretaste of that sweetness, especially here in the Eucharist, until it is our turn to receive that same summons. In the meantime, let us live as we wish to die, as empty-handed as we can, trusting in the Lord, caring for each other and finding the joy in his presence that will carry us through even to our last hour.

Eternal rest give unto them O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace. Amen.

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Diaconate Ordinations June 2018

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To have eyes for the good things of the Lord is to live by faith, to see life with the eyes of faith

Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster

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Given at the Mass of Ordination to the diaconate of Alex Burke, Kingsley Izundu and Colin Macken at Westminster Cathedral on 23rd June 2018.

In this ceremony, these three men, Alex, Kingsley and Colin, your friends, colleagues, indeed husbands and fathers, will receive a gift of the Holy Spirit, making them sharers in the Sacrament of Holy Orders, Deacons of the Catholic Church. For all of us, this is a precious moment, the unfolding of a vocation, a call from God, which has been sensed by them and now fulfilled by the Church.

In the first reading (Acts 6.1-7), we heard of a moment like this in the very first years of the Church: the choosing of the seven men who were to assist the first Apostles of Jesus. We will come back to that text, and what we are to learn from it, in a few moments.

But first I would like to dip into the Acts of the Apostles a few chapters later. The scene has moved from Jerusalem to Antioch. The Church is spreading. There, in Chapter 13, we read these words: 'While they were offering worship, the Holy Spirit said: "I want Barnabas and Saul set apart for the work to which I have called them".' (Acts 13.2)

This is the language of the Church. Through ordination, men are 'set apart' for the work of God. That is what we do today: 'set apart' these three men for their work in the name of Jesus. But we must understand properly the meaning of that phrase. 'Set apart' does not mean 'set above', in some kind of higher state. Nor does it mean 'separated from' as if they will suddenly live in a separate world. These ways of misunderstanding the words 'set apart' is what leads to the superiority and aloofness that some call clericalism. We want no part in that.

Rather, the Gospel tells us what 'set apart' really means. It is like being 'salt' and 'light', distinctive things without which life is diminished, if not impossible. Without salt, food become tasteless. Without light, life becomes confusion. But salt is no use separated from the rest of food, and light is no use in a world of its own. No, today's ceremony 'sets apart' these three men so that they can indeed be salt, mixed into the fabric of life, and light, positioned so that they can cast light on many darkened situations.

Of course, these words of Jesus in the Gospel are not addressed only to those in Holy Orders. No, He is speaking to every one of us, all who have been 'set apart' by his first gift

of baptism. It is baptism that first sets us apart and gives us the calling to be salt and light, in the name of Jesus, in every situation.

So, today no-one loses these three men who are 'set apart'. Rather we embrace them more closely, knowing their special calling and their new role in service of us all.

Now, more precisely, what is this 'special calling'?

The first reading tells the story of a row! In Jerusalem, there were Jewish Christians who had come to the city from different parts of the world. Devout Jews often wanted to spend their later years in that Holy City. So among these incomers (I could even say immigrants), there were many widows. In our reading, these are called the Hellenists. The other group, the Hebrews, were the local Jewish Christians, speaking not Greek but Aramaic. These were the home team. And there certainly was tension between them over the provision of assistance to the elderly.

So, seven men were chosen to assist the twelve Apostles, who were all from the home team, so that the Greek speakers were not neglected. Perhaps, then, it is not surprising that the chosen seven were all from the Hellenists, as we can tell from the list of their names.

Through this decision, the twelve were now assisted by the seven. This assistance included not only 'serving at tables' but also the proclamation of the Word. This we learn almost immediately, in Chapter 8, in the account of the conversion of the Ethiopian, by Philip, first in the list of the seven. The seven were going to reach places the twelve were not getting to.

This development in the early Church, this emerging partnership has a long history. To cut it short, it has developed into the particular roles of deacon, priest and bishop as we know them today. It goes like this:

The Sacrament of Holy Orders gives a character to the inner reality, the soul, of the man receiving it. In the deacon, that character is one of service; in the priest, it is the imprint of the work of sanctification, effected especially through the offering of the sacrifice of the Mass and through the forgiving of sin; in the bishop, it is the charism of the 'governing Spirit.' Please note, however, that the charism of service is at the basis of the entire sacrament. A priest always remains a deacon, a man of service. Today I wear a dalmatic, for the bishop does not cease to be a deacon. But this charism of service, this character, this imprint of service is to shine most clearly and brightly in the person of the deacon. In this way, the deacon makes present in the Church, in the profile of its Holy Order, a living and personal sign of Christ the true and total servant.

The deacon, then, is to foster the work of service in the Church, cultivating a spirituality of service, enabling that service to flow more freely through the entire body of the Church. And, as we all know, this service has a primary and deliberate focus on the poor among us. Such is the command of the Lord. That is the calling, the work, for which Alex, Kingsley and Colin are 'set apart' by this gift of the Holy Spirit today.

But, forgive me, I have one last point to make, and it is important.

The deacon is called not only to foster and develop service to every kind of poverty but also to service at the altar. Why is that? It is because our service of the poor, our service of one another, finds its source and shape precisely in the Eucharist, celebrated at the altar.

The Eucharist is the life-blood of the Church. We come to Mass with the burdens and joys of life. We make of them an offering to Jesus so that he can present them to our Heavenly Father, bringing in return God's grace and holiness to our needy world. The place to which we come and from which we are sent out, is the Cross of Christ, his sacrifice, made present again on our altar.

It is symbolically powerful that the gifts of bread and wine, which represent our lives, are placed on the altar by the deacon and prepared by him for the sacrifice of the Mass. The gifts we are given from the altar, the precious Body and Blood of the Lord, are the mandate we receive to serve, in the love of Christ, our brothers and sisters. The deacon assists in their distribution. In this way, the altar holds the key to a full understanding of the ministry of the deacon: the ministry of service, always rooted in Christ, always flowing from his all-powerful gifts, always reaching out to those most in need.

May God bless our actions this day. May God bless these deacons always. May their ministry, through his grace, be a cause of joy for us all. Amen.

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Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom

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Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster

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Given at the Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom at Westminster Cathedral on 28th October 2017

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to Westminster Cathedral, for this Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom, surely a highlight of the gathering of the Bishops of the Eastern Catholic Churches of Europe. I welcome in particular His Beatitude Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk. To have here in our midst the Father and Head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church is a real honour. I welcome too His Excellency Archbishop Edward Adams, the Apostolic Nuncio, who is representing His Holiness Pope Francis, as well as Bishop Hlib Lonchyna, Bishop of the Eparchy of the Holy Family in London, all my brother bishops of Eastern and Latin rite, and all the priests, religious and faithful present in the cathedral this afternoon.

It is sixty years since, in June 1957, the Apostolic Exarchate of the Holy Family in Exile was established for the faithful of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in England and Wales. This is a significant anniversary: one we do well to celebrate. Yet how the political and religious situation across Europe has changed since then! These changes, not least in the eastern parts of Europe, have brought with them great hope after years of darkness: yet great challenges face the Church. Here, a major development has been the establishment, in January 2013, of the Eparchy of the Holy Family in London, followed by the Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Great Britain in October 2016.

These Eparchies have been established in a land where for centuries priests ministered without the support of a hierarchy, where a careless word could, literally, cost a life, where the faith itself seemed to be hanging by a thread. There are indeed points of contact in the history of our churches. The development from Exarchates to Eparchies has brought both continuity and change. How good it is that the Ukrainian Greek Eparchy remains under the patronage of the Holy Family. But the Holy Family 'in Exile' no longer.

Today there is, for you all, I trust, a real sense of homecoming. Something familiar to the Holy Family themselves, as they made their way back from fulfilling their civic responsibilities to the Romans in Bethlehem to their home in Nazareth. That homecoming was not an end in itself; instead, it provided the context in which Christ grew to maturity. Our Christian communities and families can and must take their inspiration from this

example. Blessed Pope Paul VI made the point well on a visit to Nazareth in 1964: 'Nazareth is the school in which we begin to understand the life of Jesus. It is the school of the Gospel.... Here we learn the method by which we can come to understand Christ. Here we discover the need to observe the milieu of his sojourn among us – places, period of time, customs, language, religious practices, all of which Jesus used to reveal himself to the world.' Today, as we Latin rite Catholics witness and take part in liturgies not so often seen in this cathedral, we pray that they can bring us to a deeper understanding of the things of Christ. Though I am reminded that this is not the first time there has been an Eastern liturgy in Westminster Cathedral: in October 1926, the then newly-established Society of St John Chrysostom arranged a Divine Liturgy in the Byzantine-Slavonic rite, as the culmination of an Eastern Liturgical Week, with Cardinal Bourne in attendance.

The liturgy of the Church, properly and reverently undertaken, can be among the most powerful of catechetical methods. Indeed liturgical catechesis is, rightly, something of a priority to your church life and this synod. The reverence we show for the things of God is a barometer of our reverence for God himself; those who see the love and care we put into our liturgical celebrations are, we pray, the more likely themselves to grow in knowledge and love of him towards whom our praise is ordered. More than that, liturgy gives what it teaches, drawing those who live and experience it deeper into the life of grace, in word and gesture, in symbol and sacrament. In the Gospel today, we hear of the reaction of the ten lepers to their cleansing. Nine were healed and went on their way; we hear no more of them. But one reacted by praising God, falling at the feet of Jesus and giving him thanks. It was this one who was rewarded with consoling words from Jesus. 'Rise and go; your faith has made you well.' The liturgy, performed with care and reverence, makes us well. It can teach us to go and do likewise. It is valuable catechesis indeed.

Catechesis would not be worthy of the name if it did not have one eye on evangelisation. We do not learn of the things of faith to keep them to ourselves. Looking outward is so very important. History teaches us this again and again. We might think of the mission of Saints Cyril and Methodius, brothers and monks from Constantinople, that immersed the Eastern Slavs in the faith and liturgical tradition of the Christian East. We know how, in more recent times, the faith, kept alive of necessity in secret under oppressive regimes, has had the opportunity to flourish afresh: we give thanks for all those who kept the faith in hard times, and have given witness more openly as Christianity has been reasserted in the public sphere.

All efforts at catechesis, all initiatives of evangelisation, make no sense unless viewed in the context of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The victory of Christ, won in the face of what seemed on human terms an impossible defeat, is the wellspring of our hope. That hope is evident in the Eastern Catholic Churches today. In Ukraine, confidence, faith and optimism are evident. We might think of the new Catholic university, the seminaries full of young men testing their vocation, the social programmes. In Belarus, which I was privileged to visit recently, there is a similar story, with the restoration of so many churches and the re-emerging of Catholic life. It can be no accident that the rich new Catholic catechism produced by the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church is called Christ our Pascha. A church that was outwardly non-existent in 1991 is now indeed in resurrection: a resurrection that is a powerful image of the Christian mission to 'restore all things in Christ'.

May God bless the gathering of Eastern Bishops, of which this Divine Liturgy is such a central part. May you be the 'watchful guardians of communion' and 'servants of ecclesial unity' (*Ecclesia in medio oriente* 39) of whom Pope Benedict and Pope Francis have both spoken. And may we all allow the beauty and holiness of today's celebration to lead us on to a deeper, ever more outward-looking faith in Jesus Christ.

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Easter Sunday - Diocese of Westminster

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Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster

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Easter Sunday

Given at the Mass of the day on Easter Sunday, 16th April, 2017, at Westminster Cathedral

Last night there was a fire in the Cathedral. It was strong and powerful and it spread very quickly. We did not call the fire brigade. It was the Easter fire, the fire of the Resurrection of Jesus from the tomb of death. It spread until every person present was holding its flame, at the tip of the candle that each held high.

Today we celebrate that new fire, the new life brought to us from beyond the doors of death for he is risen from the dead!

We have heard from the witnesses to this event: Peter, who was first to enter the empty tomb and who met, walked and talked with the Risen Christ; John, who was also present and who stepped aside to allow Peter to enter first; Mary of Magdala who first raised the astonishing news; Paul, whose life was so dramatically changed by his encounter with this Jesus and who says to us that the glory which is Christ's will be ours also!

The fire of faith, ignited by this unique event, burns brightly today throughout the world.

It burns in the hearts of the people of the villages of Qaraqosh and Karemlash in the plain of Nineveh, where today Mass will be celebrated in churches damaged by ISIS. There Christians will again gather now that this reign of terror has, at least in those places, been brought to an end.

It burns brightly in the hearts of so many Christians, in Egypt, in many countries in Africa, and in other parts of the Middle East, where many have been martyred for their faith in this Risen Lord. For them, life in Christ is worth more than life without him. These are no suicide deaths. They love life and die only because it is taken from them because of their faith. Theirs is the true meaning of martyrdom.

This Easter fire burns strongly in the hearts of so many people in this country who dedicate time and effort, in the name of Jesus, to providing food, shelter, comfort and hope to millions of the world's poor, both here and in many nations around the world.

This faith sustains the long, slow work for peace. Patriarch Louis Sakho, speaking about peace in Iraq, said: 'Peace must be achieved by us religious leaders as well as politicians, through courageous initiatives and responsible decisions.' With other religious leaders, he will take forward the process of seeking the rebuilding the 12,000 damaged homes and churches, 'in the land', as he said, 'where we were born and have lived for 1400 years, together with our Muslim brothers and sisters, sharing one civilisation'. We too must sustain this work, starting here with our neighbours in this land.

Today we pray for peace in our troubled world, as confrontations harden and threats increase. We pray for wisdom and prudence in world leaders and an unwavering determination for cooperation rather than conflict.

This Easter Day is a call for us to renew, in our lives, the pattern of this faith. In the days of Holy Week we have learned again what that means. There are four aspects, four facets to this pathway of faith we are to walk. They come to us directly from the Risen Lord.

We are to honour him, day by day, with our prayer, especially in the prayer of the Eucharist, for he told us: 'Do this in memory of me.'

We are to follow him in service of those in need, the forgotten ones. This is his Royal Road of service, which he told us to take, freely offering respect and reverence to the poor for in them we encounter the Risen Lord himself. They are not recipients of our gracious charity. They are the face of the one whom we love. This is why our efforts will never cease, for this love is stronger even than death.

Thirdly, we are to bring to him the burden of our sin and the sorrows of our broken world. He wants us to be free of that load. He soaks up the anger and evil of our world, without retaliation, as he dies on the Cross of Good Friday. Only there will we find the peace and salvation for which our hearts and our world aches.

And, finally, we are to keep fresh in our hearts the readiness to see beyond death, to the vista he opens for us. We are never to lose these eyes of faith, which take us beyond the agony of suffering and tragedy, beyond the pain of the injustices of this world, beyond the darkness of death that awaits us all. In his Resurrection is our hope. His Resurrection is true. Our hope is not deceptive. It is strong and firm and utterly reliable.

The light of this Easter day, the strength of this fire of faith, is the true antidote to the corrosive cynicism of aspects of our public culture that wants to belittle what it cannot comprehend and undermine what it may reluctantly admire. Today we celebrate the true victor, the one whose triumph entails no losers except sin and death, in which all who wish share the victory and find in it the true fulfilment of their souls.

Christ is Risen. Alleluia. May he reign in our hearts and bring us his peace. I wish you all a most joyful Easter indeed!

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Easter Vigil of the Holy Night

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Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster

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Given at the Easter Vigil of the Holy Night, 15th April, 2017, at Westminster Cathedral

Today in these words of majesty and in this sumptuous music we celebrate and we sing of his new life. We read of echoes of his victory in the past, in the history of Israel. We hear that it is ours to share. As we strive to make ourselves one with Christ, we receive our mission.

St Paul says to us: 'You too must consider yourselves to be dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus.'

Yet there is one symbol that we have used uniquely in the Church's year: a fire. We lit a fire to help us to understand the brilliant, life-changing newness of what we celebrate. And from that fire we all received a part, the fire at the tip of the candle we hold.

To understand the significance of this fire, we look at the story of Moses. Moses is saved from certain death as a child. One day as he is tending the flock, he sees a burning bush in the desert. 'Funny,' he thinks, 'it's on fire but not burning up.' As he approaches, God speaks: 'Take off your shoes.' There he comes, as it were, face to face with God. There, he receives his mission, as we do, gathered round this fire.

Moses is told to go to Pharaoh and demand the freedom of his enslaved people. 'How can I?' he asks. 'I will be with you always,' the Lord replies. Moses asks, 'Who are you?' 'I am who am,' comes the reply.

Our mission seems as impossible: to bring to this troubled, war-torn, exploiting world, the peace and new life of Christ; to bring to our wayward hearts, with our capacity to misuse people, to belittle them, to cast them aside, the mercy and gracefulness of Christ. Surely, this is impossible, unrealistic!

Yet, in the majesty of this Easter fire, in the light of this Easter candle, in the summons of the candle that each one of us holds, Jesus says the same to us: 'Yes you can, for I am with you.' And who are you? 'I am who am. I bear the Divine title, for I am God. I have conquered death, and I will set you free!'

Over the days of this Holy Week, we have learned what he wants of us. He wants four things.

First, he wants us to offer our prayers to him, most of all the prayer of the Mass: 'Do this in memory of me.'

Second, he asks us to offer our service to one another, especially to those most in need, for this is his royal road, the pathway to true dignity as taken by him, the Lord and Master when he washed his disciples' feet.'

Third, he wants us to bring to him our sin and brokenness, for this is why he died on the Cross, to bear our burden and bring us his mercy.

Fourth, he wants us to hold firm to the life beyond death, beyond suffering and pain, and never to lose heart, for he has both overcome that last enemy and given us a share in his victory.

In a moment, we will welcome and baptise those who want to know and share this way of life. They will receive a lighted candle. Ours will be burning again.

On this holy and wondrous night, let us hold up our candle with pride. See in its tip of fire the burning bush of Moses, the sign of God's power and presence now given to you, that you too may live in God's freedom and be his witnesses in your way of life, today and into life eternal.

Amen.

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Ecumenical Service at Liverpool Cathedral

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Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster

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Given at the Ecumenical Service in Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral on the Solemnity of Pentecost, 4th June 2017

'Thy Kingdom Come!' These three words stand at the heart of Christian prayer. Thankfully, they have stood at the heart of much prayer in these last eight days, a prayer shared openly and deliberately by many Christians of different churches and traditions, in many parts of the world. We thank God as we bring to a close this Octave of Christian prayer for our shared Christian mission, which has helped to make these three words resonate afresh in so many hearts and minds.

'Thy Kingdom Come!' This is at the heart of Christian prayer because it is at the centre of the ministry of Jesus, our gracious and loving Lord. His coming was announced by John the Baptist in this manner (Mk 1.15). He himself broke the silence of his early years with the words: 'Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is close at hand' (Mt 3.2).

The coming of his Kingdom is his promise and, as his disciples, it is our hope. For this coming, we pray every day.

The texts of the Gospels affirm this focus. The Kingdom of Heaven, or the Kingdom of God, is mentioned 61 times in the Gospel texts, yet its precise meaning is hard to pin down.

At times it has been taken to indicate the coming of a visible reality akin to, or replacing, an oppressive political order. Perhaps this was the first thought of the disciples. It has been entertained many times since then. Yet the phrase has also been taken to mean a truly 'spiritual kingdom', a kingdom of the heart, an inner moral ethic. Perhaps this has been part of a particularly liberal vision, which has seen humanity progressing on a pathway of continual growth and goodness. Then the 'Kingdom of God' has an eschatological meaning, pointing to the close of history and the restoration of all in Christ. But the meaning that is surely most clearly reflected in the prayer the Lord gave us is that his Kingdom will come, his will be done 'on earth as it is in heaven'. The Kingdom is a reality both already secured for the eternal future and still to be realised step by step, in our lives, both individually and in the way we fashion our communities and societies.

This Kingdom, then, this conformity to the will of the Father, is central to our Christian endeavour, to our discipleship. But here I think we benefit from one firm clarification: that

we are not primarily called to build the Kingdom as to seek to enter it. We are not so much its prime movers as its recipients. Our radical quest is to enter the Kingdom, to dwell in it and to be shaped by it, both now and in the fullness of time: our limited, personal time and in the fullness of all created time.

The unfolding of this Kingdom, and of these intertwining histories, is the work of the Holy Spirit. Of that there can be no doubt, for it is this Holy Spirit who hovered over the chaos at the emerging of time and rendered that chaos into an ordered world, a cosmos. So too the final eschaton will be achieved by the power of the same Holy Spirit, when all things are rendered whole and pure and brought into the presence of God. And now, each day, the Holy Spirit refashions our nature, in as much as we permit, into an image of the life of God, seen in its fullness in Christ Jesus.

So, there cannot be a better day than this day of Pentecost on which to pray anew these same three words: 'Thy Kingdom Come!' For on this day we seek to be in the place of the first apostles, gathered with Mary, to receive afresh this gift so that we too may be heralds of this Kingdom, now and in the days to come. This is the pattern of the coming of the Kingdom, even as we have heard in the words of the Gospel: 'As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you. Receive the Holy Spirit' (John 20.20).

St Cyril of Jerusalem, writing in the fourth century, provides us with such a beautiful commentary on the work of the Holy Spirit among us. His words are both reassuring and challenging. He refers first to the image of water, used by Jesus himself 'on the last and greatest day of the festival' when he said that we were to come to him and drink for 'from his breast shall flow fountains of living water' (John 7.37-38). Then Cyril asks: 'But why did Christ call the grace of the Spirit water?' And his answer is wonderful:

'Because all things are dependent on water..... Water comes down from heaven as rain, and although it is always the same in itself, it produces many different effects, one in the palm tree, another in the vine, and so on throughout the whole of creation. It does not come down, now as one thing, now as another, but while remaining essentially the same, it adapts itself to the needs of every creature that receives it.'

He continues: 'In the same way the Holy Spirit, whose nature is always the same, simple and indivisible, apportions grace to each person as he wills. Like a dry tree, which puts forth shoots when watered; the soul bears the fruit of holiness when repentance has made it worthy of receiving the Holy Spirit. Although the Spirit never changes, the effects of his action, by the will of God and in the name of Christ, are both many and marvellous.'

Then he says: 'The Spirit makes one person a teacher of divine truth, inspires another to prophesy, gives another the power of casting out devils, enables another to interpret Holy Scripture. The Spirit strengthens one person's self-control, shows another how to help the poor, teaches another to fast and lead a life of asceticism, makes another oblivious to the needs of the body, trains another for martyrdom. His action is different in different people, but the Spirit is always the same. In each person, Scripture says, the Spirit reveals his presence in a particular way for the common good.'

St Cyril, then, assures us that today too we need not fear our differences if we are truly open to the same Holy Spirit. Nor should we feel hesitant in our task of mission 'for the

common good', for that is precisely the purpose for which this Spirit nurtures our different gifts and reciprocal relationships. We should be fearful if we are not repentant, for as Jesus himself said, the first purpose of this great gift is for the forgiveness of sins, and we can hardly be ready to receive this gift if, at heart, we do not acknowledge and repent of our sins and of our divisions. This too should be the fruit of our prayer.

'Thy Kingdom Come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven!' This prayer has inspired so much Christian endeavour across the centuries and continues to do so. Surely, it has sustained the long and costly effort of the construction of these two great cathedrals, built to the glory of God and as a sign and place of his realm and the peace it gives. At the Metropolitan Cathedral, we celebrate our 50th birthday. May this occasion and this prayer reinforce our commitment to each other and our deep desire to work side by side, in a profound unity of spirit. We pray that as we seek to enter the Kingdom the will of the Father and the power of the Holy Spirit may indeed be seen in our lives and revealed to be at the source of so much good in our society today, for we know that the Spirit always blows where he wills. And for this too, this utter freedom of the Holy Spirit, we give thanks today and always.

Amen.

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Emmanuel: God-with-us

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Christmas Reflection 2017

The journey of the Magi to Bethlehem was not easy. As TS Eliot wrote: 'A cold coming we had of it, just the worst time of the year for a journey, and such a long journey: the way's deep and the weather sharp, the very dead of winter.' The shepherds, too, in their journey to the crib had a mountain to climb, the mountain of social exclusion, for they were the lowest of the low, not welcomed anywhere. Yet both shepherds and scholars found their way to the manger and to the person of Jesus whose coming remains the hinge of human history.

Many aspects of our society today are distanced from this saving truth of Jesus of Nazareth. We live in a culture that wants to push religious belief out of sight, into the margins. Now we have a long journey to make, finding our way through these barriers, through this thickening forest, to the true source of our joy and stability, Jesus, the one alone who is the truth of God fully expressed in our flesh.

It is his coming which we celebrate in the holy season. We can do so with a profound and lasting confidence that he who conquered death itself can also penetrate our darkness. His coming tells us that such is his deepest desire: to be Emmanuel, God-with-us, no matter how far we may have wandered. He summoned the shepherds, in their place of work, with music and brightness; he called the wise men through their scholarship and desire to know. He calls each one of us, if we have the sensitivity to recognise that summons!

We read that the wise men returned to their 'old dispensation', no longer feeling at home there. In the presence of this Christ-child they discovered something that remained in their hearts, an enduring peace and joy which they could no longer push to one side. We believe that they went home as men more wise, as men more peaceful in themselves, as men more poised in their lives. The shepherds, too, we know, went home full of song and gladness for what their eyes had seen.

This is the invitation offered to us this Christmas. And its fruits can be the same for us too!

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Fatima Chapel of Apparitions

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Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster

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We are here today, in the Chapel of the Apparitions, one hundred years after the three children of Fatima were given the great gift of seeing Our Blessed Lady, on this very spot.

We have to use our imagination to visualise the scene. This was a place of rough land, full of stones, with trees, like the one we see just here. It was a place that was good only for grazing sheep. And that was why they came. It was here that Mary chose to appear to them, in a pattern of appearances about which you will have read.

The children's names were Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta, two of whom are already beatified. Now, Francisco and Jacinta will be declared saints of God, on May 13th, by Pope Francis, here in this place. Lucia's life, which was much longer, is now being studied for her possible beatification, too.

When, in 2000, Pope St John Paul II declared Francisco and Jacinta to be blessed he said that they were 'two candles whom God had set burning to illuminate humanity.'

What can we learn from the shining light of these two young lives?

Firstly, we learn that God chooses us because of our love for him. God does not choose us for the gift of faith because we are clever, or attractive of personality, or successful in what we do. No. He chooses us because we are ready to give him our love. He chooses us because of the simplicity and openness of our hearts.

Secondly, we learn that with that choice of God, hardship will enter our lives. When God chose these three children to be blessed in this remarkable way, they entered into a pathway of suffering. No one believed what they had to say about what had happened. They were isolated and punished. They were rejected. They were not believed.

This can happen to us too. In our society, those who believe in God, who trust in God, who live by God's word will often be ridiculed, or mocked, or treated with contempt. We don't mind. It doesn't matter. We know what is important: that our hearts remain open and trusting of God. That God remains the centre of our lives and of how we try to live.

Thirdly, from these three children, we learn how best to respond to the choice of God, to the gift of a loving faith. We learn from them that our response is to be that of prayer, penance and self-offering. We learn that the best way to begin each day, and to end each

day, is with a time of prayer: a morning offering, an evening prayer of thanksgiving and praise. We learn to be ready not to seek always our own comfort or ease, but to deny ourselves and put the needs of others before our own. We learn also to see our lives as an offering to be made to others. We understand that all that is best in our lives comes to us as a gift and that the best way to use our lives is to make of them a gift, a self-offering, in imitation of Jesus.

Then there is a fourth lesson we learn. It is this. In the hearts of these three children was a longing for God, a longing to be with God, a longing for heaven. They experienced this as a burning desire. They wanted so much to be fully with God. Indeed, Francisco and Jacinta asked Our Blessed Lady if they could go to heaven soon. She said that they would and indeed both of them died at a very young age. When she heard this, Lucia cried out: 'Am I to stay here alone?' Mary answered her: 'Don't lose heart. I will never forsake you!'

In our lives too there is to be a longing for heaven, a longing to be in our heavenly home, in the presence of God forever! And there is also to be a quiet confidence that even when those we love have died and gone before us, we are never forsaken. Mary is with us always, guiding us home too.

Mary's message here in Fatima addresses directly our quest for peace, our longing for peace, and for peace in our troubled world. She tells us repeatedly that the part we are to play includes constant prayer for peace, a prayer in which we seek to unite ourselves to her Immaculate Heart. This is important because, as Pope Benedict explained, the Immaculate Heart of Mary is 'nearest to the Sacred Heart of Jesus'. This is our pathway of prayer, especially here in Fatima, prayer united with the Immaculate Heart of Mary because she is nearest to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. And today, as we pray, we think especially of all those who are persecuted for their faith, who are killed because of their faith in the love of that Sacred Heart of Jesus, a faith which they treasure more than life itself.

Today, here in this place made holy by the presence of Our Blessed Lady, we consecrate ourselves again to her. In doing so we use the words first used by Pope St John Paul II here on 13 May 1982:

'Therefore, O Mother of individuals and peoples, you who "know all their sufferings and their hopes", you who have a mother's knowledge of all the struggles between good and evil, between light and darkness, which afflict the modern world, accept the cry which we, as though moved by the Holy Spirit, address directly to your Heart. Embrace, with the love of the Mother and Handmaid, this human world of ours, which we entrust and consecrate to you, for we are full of disquiet for the earthly and eternal destiny of individuals and peoples.

'In a special way we entrust and consecrate to you those individuals and nations which particularly need to be entrusted and consecrated.

'We have recourse to your protection, holy Mother of God: reject not the prayers we send up to you in our need. Reject them not. Accept our humble trust and our act of entrusting.'

The Holy Father continued with a litany of intercession, which we repeat today:

'From famine and war, deliver us.

From nuclear war, from incalculable self-destruction, from every kind of war, deliver us.

From the sins against the life of man from its very beginnings, deliver us.

From hatred and from the demeaning of the dignity of the children of God, deliver us.

From every kind of injustice in the life of society, both national and international, deliver us.

From the readiness to trample the commandments of God, deliver us.

From attempts to stifle in human hearts the very trust of God, deliver us.

From sins against the Holy Spirit, deliver us.

'Accept, O Mother of Christ, this cry laden with the sufferings of all individual human beings, laden with the sufferings of whole societies.

'Let there be revealed, once more, in the history of the world your infinite power of merciful Love. May it put a stop to evil. May it transform consciences. May your Immaculate Heart reveal for all the light of true hope.'

Amen.

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Feast of the Holy Family 2017

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Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster

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Pastoral Letter for Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, 31st December 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ,

I hope that during these last few days you have managed to visit the crib. It's still there, waiting for you to make that visit, especially today, on the Feast of the Holy Family.

Come with me and let's take a look at this new and tiny family, in Bethlehem, a long way from home and in circumstances of real hardship.

See, there is St Joseph, the good and faithful servant, entrusted with Jesus, the Word of God made flesh. He reminds me of my father, whose name was Henry Joseph. He was an unfailing point of stability and wisdom for our family. He gave us a sense of order and purpose. A bit like St Joseph, I think. But I also know, too well, that not every family is so blessed.

Next, look, there is our Blessed Lady, Mary, the mother of Jesus. She gave her body to be the first home of Jesus, who was conceived in her through the direct power of the Holy Spirit.

My mum's name was Mary, too. She gave her entire self to us as a family. I must admit, a little sheepishly, that she did most of the work around the house, especially at Christmas. She made it a time of graciousness, welcome and generosity. That's what mothers do; and not only mothers, of course!

This is the heart of the Holy Family, the heart of family life. In families, loving hands create places of safety and joy, just as God's loving hands hold all creation together, giving every moment its meaning and purpose. The rhythm of everyday family life, of food, rest and play, watched over by a loving parent, no matter its simplicity, is a parable of that deeper love, a reflection of God's own work of creation.

I find it most reassuring, in this time of uncertainty and stress, to see how family life continues to create well-springs of selfless love. So much of the true goodness in our society comes by way of the family, so many marvellous young people, so many generous neighbours! And this is true not only of stable family life, but also of families who face their

difficulties with faithfulness and courage, and of families who find forgiveness after a breakdown, or who bear tragedy with dignity and fortitude. Family life is so often our saving grace. As a society we neglect the support of family life at our peril.

Today, let us thank God for the life of our family, whether we are close together or scattered to the four winds; whether we are in harmony with each other, or marked by discord and discontent. Thank God for the grace we have received, the maturity and wisdom into which we are growing in our homes, through joys and trials alike, just as Jesus did in his home in Nazareth (Lk 2:40).

As we approach this New Year and ponder on the resolutions we are going to make, we can do no better than to heed the words of St Paul:

'You are God's chosen race, his saints; he loves you, and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive one another as soon as a quarrel begins. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same. Over all these clothes, to keep them together and complete them, put on love. And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts' (Col. 3:12-15).

Now these are resolutions in plenty!

Recently a member of staff at Heathrow said to me how much he admired Pope Francis. 'What difficult journeys the Pope makes!' he exclaimed. Then he added, 'He teaches us all, he teaches the whole world, so clearly by what he does, by his actions!'

May that be said of us, too. In every home, in every family, may our actions speak more eloquently than our words!

May I wish you all a very happy New Year and may God bless you always.

Yours devotedly,

Cardinal Vincent Nichols

Archbishop of Westminster

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First Anniversary of Grenfell Tower Tragedy

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Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster

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Given at the Mass commemorating the first anniversary of the Grenfell Tower Tragedy at St Francis of Assisi Church, Notting Hill on 13th June 2018.

Who can ever forget the images of the burning Grenfell Tower? They are seared into our imagination. They touch our hearts so deeply. Indeed, they break our hearts. With the passing of time, they do not lose their power. What we see, in reality, in the eye of memory, reaches our hearts, bringing dismay, sadness, anger and sheer horror.

There is also a pathway to our hearts in what we hear.

Day by day, at present, we hear stories of those whose lives were changed forever by this fire. We listen to their accounts and their emotions, and our hearts almost stop beating, such is the immensity of what happened. In listening we are again overwhelmed by the horror of this tragedy.

This evening we gather to pray. We pray for all who have been caught up in this unforgettable disaster. We pray for all who did their best, even if with hindsight it wasn't well judged. We pray especially for those who died, the 72 whose names we shall hear in the courtyard after Mass, remembering the 15 members of this parish among them. We pray for those who mourn their loss. We pray for all whose hearts were broken one year ago today.

What, you might ask, is the point of this prayer?

Prayer, too, is a pathway to the heart. Prayer is a way of reaching and touching the deepest part of our own hearts. Prayer is also a way into the heart of God.

In prayer, we strive to express that which is often inexpressible. Indeed, as St Paul teaches us, we ask the help of the Holy Spirit who 'expresses our plea in a way that could never be put into words, and God who knows everything in our hearts knows perfectly well what he means' (Romans 8:26).

In this way, our prayer not only arises from our deepest hearts but also reaches the heart of God. With Jesus, in prayer, we simply whisper into the ear of God all that burdens us so much. And our whispering reaches the heart of God, carried there by his only beloved Son.

This prayer, our prayer this evening, takes us to the very heart of the mystery of our living and dying. We live within the embrace of God. We die, falling into that same embrace, but now without encumbrance or limitation.

In the Gospel passage we have heard, St John tell us of the faith of Martha, the faith by which she lived through the death of her brother. When Jesus says, 'I am the resurrection. If anyone believes in me, even though he die, he will live' Martha replies, 'Yes, Lord. I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who was to come into this world. (John 11:25-27). This is the faith by which we too are invited to live through this time, this experience, this tragedy.

In the other two readings, from Isaiah and the Book of Revelation, our faith is expanded beyond this realm. Remember the two great images of heaven, given for our immense consolation? When we are immersed in sorrow and dismay, even through our tears, we can glimpse that 'new heaven and new earth', the 'holy city coming down from God out of heaven, as beautiful as a bride all dressed for her husband' (Revelation 21:2). When our hearts are broken, or consumed with resentment and anger, we do not lose sight of the vision of the heavenly banquet 'of rich food, a banquet of fine wines' at which God will 'remove the mourning veil covering all people and the shroud enwrapping all nations' (Isaiah 25:7).

It is the power of prayer to open again our hearts to this hope, this steadfast and reliable promise given by God and sealed in the precious blood of his Son. It is the pathway of prayer, which we take again this evening, to equip us to live together even through the worst of times, as has been shown in this parish, in this neighbourhood, in the very worst of those times.

And there is one more pathway opened up by prayer. Prayer takes us into the heart of our family, for in prayer we learn again that we are all children of one Heavenly Father. This is only one source of life and all those who lift up their hearts to that one source of life, no matter what words they use, are bonded together. Prayer defines the true shape of our human family. This is more profoundly true, more powerfully so, of those who lift up their prayer in, through and with Jesus Christ, who leads us in our faith and is our supreme high priest (Hebrews 4:14) and who never ceases to intercede for us before his Father. He is the way, the truth and the life, for his entire life was the pathway of supreme prayer and the safe passage that we can all take.

Not only does Jesus carry our prayer to the heart of the Father but he also gives us, as our companion in this vale of tears, our most Blessed Mother. We are always encouraged, then, to pray to Mary, to pray with Mary for in such prayer we come together in her embrace. This too is for our great consolation. This we will do in our prayers after Mass.

Now let us take up again this pathway of prayer, carrying to our Father all our sadness and, above all, all those who lost their lives in the tragedy of the Grenfell Tower.

Eternal rest grant to them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace. Amen.

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Funeral Mass of Fr Patrick Sammon RIP

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Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster

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Given at the Funeral Mass for Fr Patrick Joseph Sammon, RIP at St Anthony of Padua, Edgware, on Thursday 14th June 2018

In the five years, so far, of the time of Pope Francis, one remarkable initiative stands out: his decision to call the Church to observe a Year of Mercy, from 2015 to 2016. What a response that had! It revealed, all over the world, a great hunger to understand and take to heart that, in Pope Francis' own phrase, 'the name of God is mercy!'

In fact, in his very first address given from the balcony of the Apostolic Palace on Sunday 17th March 2013, Pope Francis spoke about the mercy of God and how it endured beyond all our waywardness, and how our loving Father never tires of pouring out his mercy, even when we become weary of asking for it. He urged us to constantly show mercy towards one another, explaining that we can do so only when we have been 'caressed by the loving mercy of God ourselves.'

My brothers and sisters, as we celebrate this Funeral Mass for Fr Patrick Sammon, we do well to ponder on this mercy of God. It is to this mercy that we turn as we commend his soul into the hands of our Father. And it is also a focus for our thanksgiving for, as we heard at the beginning of Mass, in Mgr Martin's eloquent obituary, Fr Pat had his own very special way of making the mercy of God something present and tangible to so very many people. He had a deeply compassionate heart and a knack of conveying that compassion in a manner which gave encouragement and strength to those in need. We thank God for that graceful gift which brought comfort to many and which was a hallmark of the life of the much-loved priest.

At his ordination on 13th May 1978, Pat's inner being and his daily life were given a gift of grace so that he could be, in that special way, a disciple of Christ, a man 'of Jesus'. So it is so fitting that he was a man of mercy, for Pope Francis has reminded us that 'Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy', adding, 'Jesus of Nazareth, by his words, his actions, and his entire person reveals the mercy of God.' (*Misericordiae Vultus*)

Now, this is what we have heard in this morning's Gospel passage taken from St Luke (Lk 24.13-35). The two disciples are making their sad journey away from Jerusalem, a name that is used to represent the presence of God among his people, the Church. They are walking away from the Church, disappointed in all their hopes, disillusioned by what they

have seen and heard. Now we must notice what the Risen Jesus does: he goes to walk with them, continuing their journey away from Jerusalem. Only gradually does he get beyond their sense of being lost and speaks to their hearts. Even when he sits 'at table' he does not tell them to return to Jerusalem. That is the decision that they make, compelled by the compassion they have found in him.

In this account, then, we see the mercy of God at work, in the person of Jesus, coming to us in our every dismay, in the prison of sin which we construct around ourselves, and opening for us a door through which we can retrace our steps back to him.

Every time I hear the reading from the Prophet Isaiah, the First Reading of our Mass this morning (Is 25.6-9), my imagination conjures up a quirky thought. We heard of the promise of a banquet of rich food, indeed of fine wines. I can't stop myself from imagining that as I approach the throne of God, undoubtedly fearful, I am consoled by the wonderful smells that come from heaven's kitchen! Yes, there is such a welcome awaiting us, if only our hearts are open to receive him. He longs to 'remove the mourning veil', 'the shroud enwrapping all nations'. God reaches out to 'wipe away the tears from every cheek' and, most powerfully of all, he 'takes away his people's shame, everywhere on earth.' That is the promise awaiting us. That is the ultimate gift for which we pray this morning, for dear Fr Pat.

This means that we, together with St Paul, will not be 'like other people who have no hope' (Thes 4.13). Rather St Paul tells us that we are to be confident in our faith that God will bring all who have died to be 'with him' and that 'with such thoughts as these we should comfort one another' (Thes 5.11). And so we do!

This morning, we also pray in a particular way for all who died in the terrible fire in the Grenfell Tower one year ago today. We remember at this moment the 72 people who have been identified as dying as a result of that inferno and pray for all who mourn them and live with the lasting effects of that terrible trauma. May they rest in peace.

Fr Pat loved this parish of St Anthony's here in Edgware. He was not the only priest to find fulfilment in the priesthood here. I am

sure that the wonderful traditions of prayer in this parish lie at the heart of that truth. So I take this opportunity of thanking this parish for its faithfulness and for its love of the priesthood. It is a generosity which is repaid over and over again. I thank all who supported Fr Pat in every stage of his life, and I mention in particular Sr Clement who not only cared for him day by day in his time of greatest need, but who also had a deep understanding of the goodness in his heart. I offer my sincere condolences to his family, both those present and those at home in Ireland. May these words of comfort reach you all and may the mercy of God touch your lives each day.

But now, I can hear the trumpet of God calling out that I should continue no longer, for there are far more important, more powerful, words to be said: the words of our prayers, the words of the Mass by which Jesus himself comes among us in this great Sacrament. For it is he, by his all-powerful word who will bring us home. It is he who in this Sacrament gives us the promise of future glory, the promise of our heavenly home which we pray is now enjoyed by our brother and priest, Patrick Joseph Sammon.

Amen.

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Golden Jubilee of Liverpool Cathedral

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To have eyes for the good things of the Lord is to live by faith, to see life with the eyes of faith

Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster

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Given at the Golden Jubilee of Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King, Liverpool on the Solemnity of Pentecost, 4th June 2017

Golden jubilees are a time for memories. And today is no exception as we celebrate this bold and magnificent Cathedral of Christ the King.

This cathedral enjoys a one-hundred-and-fifty-year history. Its first design was presented in 1853 by Edward Welby Pugin (1834-1875) and became Our Lady Immaculate Parish Church, in Everton. Then came designs by Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944) and by Adrian Gilbert Scott (1882-1963), the brother of the architect of the great Anglican cathedral, in Liverpool (Giles Gilbert Scott, 1880-1960). Then we come to 1959, and the competition for 'a cathedral in our time' with 299 entries and the winning design by Sir Frederick Gibberd. So today, we celebrate a history, which discloses much of the story of this city and its Catholic population, always wanting a cathedral landmark and proudly cherishing this cathedral, the largest place of Catholic worship in England and Wales.

But memories, if they are to warm the heart, have to be more personal. As I look around today so many memories come into my mind and heart: the presence here of Her Majesty the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh on 22nd June 1977, and the chairs specially made for her visit, her first ever visit to a Catholic cathedral in this country; the gathering of the National Pastoral Congress in 1980; the visit of Pope St John Paul II, in 1982. I remember too, so vividly, the atmosphere in this cathedral, filled to overflowing on the Sunday evening of 16th April 1989, as we waited for an hour, in total silence, for the arrival of Bishop David Sheppard so that we could begin our solemn prayer for all who had died at Hillsborough Football Stadium the previous day, that fateful Saturday. On that day, a bond was formed between the people of this city and this place in a story never forgotten. In its short life, this cathedral has seen so many remarkable events.

And not just events, but people too. Archbishops and Bishops: the *fiat* of Archbishop Heenan, the joy of Bishop Augustine Harris who consecrated this cathedral, in the presence of Her Royal Highness, Princess Margaret (14th May 1967), the dedicated service of Archbishop George Beck, followed by the most remarkable Archbishop Derek Worlock, keeping an eye on us from just over there. Then, of course, Archbishop Patrick Kelly, keeping his eye, very much alive indeed, on us from over there and Archbishop

Malcolm who presides over this great church with such grace and perception. Artists and musicians: John Piper, Patrick Reyntiens, Elizabeth Frink, Sean Price, Sir James MacMillan, Roger McGough and the Duffy brothers, Terence and Philip. There are others to recall: Sister Anthony and her transforming skills and workshop, the Cathedral Administrators who have borne the burden of everyday effort, and their army of helpers. One other person, too. 1967 saw not only the opening of this cathedral but also the release of the record, Sergeant Pepper. One track comes to mind: 'I'm fixing a hole where the rain gets in and stops my mind from wandering.....' The repairing of the roof and stabilising of this cathedral was a remarkable achievement, fruit of the determined partnership between Archbishop Derek and Mgr Michael McKenna. It was a great effort, which I hope, is never forgotten.

In the Golden Book of the cathedral, which records the names of all who have contributed to it and promises them prayers, my name can be found, back in the early fifties. We thought that one day the great cathedral might rise. I remember being told that, with a typical Liverpool pride, it would be just a few feet shorter than St Peter's Basilica, in Rome, a gesture to due deference, you understand! I also recall as a boy, singing with great gusto the hymn 'Hail Redeemer King Divine', without a doubt my boyhood favourite. It was, of course, written for the ceremony of the laying of the foundation stone of the great cathedral in 1930. Its verses still express today our faith in Christ, who alone stands at the centre of all this great history and endeavour.

For us, however, the word memory has a far deeper and more remarkable meaning. Here, in this cathedral as in every Catholic church, we not only remember, but we make real again. Our 'remembering' of the person of Jesus, makes him present to us in his words and actions, in a real and vivid way. At the focal point of every church, seen so vividly as in this cathedral, lies the altar, the place at which the sacrifice of Christ in his death on the Cross is not only remembered but made again a living reality. Here we gather at the foot of that Cross. Here we receive again its fruits: the Father's mercy, our forgiveness.

This living memorial, this memory which makes present, comes about only through the power of the Holy Spirit, whose coming upon the Apostles we celebrate on this day of Pentecost. We heard of that coming and its transforming power in the reading from the Acts of the Apostles and in the Gospel. This power of God first brought order to creation and still sustains all living beings. This power of God changed fearful fishermen into powerful witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus. This power of God which, through his gift, we invoke, changes the bread and wine we place on this altar into the Body and Blood of Christ, our food and drink for the forgiveness of our sins, for the sustaining of our lives as his disciples and for our eternal life. It is this power of God, his Holy Spirit, which is so wonderfully portrayed in that burning, red, stained glass window, whose light floods this altar of sacrifice.

This same Spirit, as St Paul tells us, is poured into our hearts so that the different gifts we have been given may be used for a good purpose and in a manner which is not only harmonious but for the benefit of all. The refracting of this light of the Holy Spirit, into the corona of light and colour of the great lantern here above us, speaks eloquently of how the Holy Spirit is to flood out from here to this city and this County of Lancashire in a spirit of service offered always in the name of our Beloved Lord Jesus.

At the end of this Mass, as at every Mass, we will be sent out to fulfil the task given to us by the Lord. Today as you leave, glancing back towards this great cathedral, please remember that it is built on the site of the Liverpool Workhouse, which stood here from 1771 to 1928. In 1900, for example, over 4,000 poor people were housed on this site, in conditions which were very harsh, even if not quite punitive. Remember, too, that Catholic priests were often refused entry and could not fulfil their ministry to the poorest of their people. These foundations can serve to remind us that our first mission is to those who today are poor and forgotten, who are on the margins, the very ones who are indeed the most beloved of Christ our King. In fulfilling this mission no obstacle, misunderstanding or hostility should ever deflect us from our purpose.

In our thanksgiving and celebration in this Cathedral of Christ the King, we pray that God's Holy Spirit, which transforms base material into divine substance, may fill us and work in our lives, transforming our humble humanity into a noble instrument of God's purpose in our world. In this we will be faithful to our great mission, so well symbolised in this cathedral, an icon of our endeavour and, more importantly, of our faith.

Amen.

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