

## **PORTSMOUTH CATHEDRAL 26/27<sup>th</sup> July 2014**

### **17<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

#### **FOTO APPEAL**

One of my favourite children's books is the Hobbit by J R Tolkien recently made into a film. It tells the exiting story of a hobbit together with a band of dwarves searching for dragon guarded gold. The idea of seeking for treasure is one that has been used many times in literature and one that is lived out by those who comb the beaches with metal detectors in the hope that they will find a valuable coin or other artefact.

Jesus uses this image in the gospel parables when he describes the man who finds hidden treasure and another who finds a priceless pearl. In both the treasure is the Kingdom of heaven and it is in finding the kingdom that will give us true joy as opposed by the transient happiness that the world may or may not give us. True joy can only be found in God's kingdom which Jesus came to inaugurate. The Church of Jesus Christ is not that kingdom but it is in the Church, which we speak of in the creed, that the Kingdom of God already exists and is the sign of that Kingdom to the world. It is a place where the values of the Kingdom, of love, joy and peace are to be lived out in the lives of his children until the final day, the consummation of all things when the Kingdom will be manifested in all its beauty and glory. So part of the task of the Church is to manifest the life of the Kingdom.

But discovering Christ and his reign is not a once for event because we know our sinfulness hampers the kingdom being fully manifested. To discover Christ and his kingdom is more of a lifelong treasure hunt as we make choices in our lives that either bring us closer to it or take us further away. We need God's

grace to do this because it needs courage to make sacrifices and to take risks for Christ if we try to faithfully seek his kingdom and his righteousness. It is part of making choices in seeking of the kingdom that has led some former Anglicans to enter full communion of the Catholic Church through the Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham

It is about the Ordinariate that I have been invited to speak today and I am grateful to Bishop Philip and the Dean for their kindness. I am conscious that many Catholics are not aware of or have misunderstandings about the Ordinariate which gives a prophetic vision for Christin Unity. I am also here to ask you to support the work the Friends of the Ordinariate which is an independent charity set up to support the growth and development of the Ordinariate in England and Wales.

The Ordinariate was set up in 2011 following an Apostolic Constitution of Pope Benedict XVI in order to provide a new structure, like a diocese, with me as the Ordinary – or the person in charge - to enable Anglicans who longed to be in communion with the Holy See to do so in groups not leaving behind those precious things from Anglicanism that had nurtured their faith but to bring them, providing they are consistent with the teachings of the Catholic Church, as something to be mutually enriching. We are as much Catholics as anyone else in communion with the Bishop of Rome. It is simply a new expression of Catholicism and part of the rich diversity which makes up the Catholic Church from the West to the East. Many of those Christian presently suffering in Iraqi and other parts of the Middle East are Catholic Christians of the Eastern Rite and we should at this time keep them and all persecuted Christians in our prayers.

When people say to us, as they sometimes do, 'why can't you become proper Catholics', what they mean is why can't you just be absorbed into the Church so that what you bring simply disappears like sugar dissolved in water. That is not a vision for Christian Unity. Christian Unity is not about Christian uniformity. It is about exploring the possibility of sharing a common faith in communion with the successor of Peter and yet having different liturgical, devotional and pastoral practices which enrich the wider Church. When Catholics and Anglicans first began talking about unity they used the phrase of being 'united but not absorbed'. In the Ordinariate that idea has been put into practice - the possibility of Unity of Faith and diversity of expression. Pope Benedict encouraged us not to leave our history behind but to take it into the Catholic Church and to share some of the distinctive aspects of Anglicanism which are consistent with the Catholic Faith. This has important ecumenical implications.

Of course compared with the rest of the Catholic Church in England and Wales we are very small but in the history of the Church great things grow from very small seeds sown. Nevertheless we are playing our part in the wider ministry and mission of the Catholic Church as our priests, as well as serving Ordinariate congregations serve in diocesan parishes and as Catholic chaplains in various institutions. In this diocese of Portsmouth, Bishop Philip has invited two of my priests to serve in parishes and another teaches at the Oratory School in Reading. Just a stone's throw from here is St Agatha's Church where you can experience a different expression of Catholic worship, using our rite of Mass provided by the Vatican which has elements taken from the Book of Common Prayer- a treasure to be shared. There are 5 Ordinariate congregations in this diocese.

I began by speaking about the gospel parables and how we must all continue seeking the Kingdom of heaven in our lives for which the Church is a sign. The disunity of Christ's Church weakens that sign. It is the teaching of the Church that its unity, which we affirm in the creed, is realised in its fullness the Catholic Church. It was to further its unity, for which the Pope is the visible source and foundation, and not for disagreements with the Church of England that led us into full communion. For many, especially the priests this has meant stepping out in faith, uncertain about the future and has involved considerable sacrifice

To help people understand us better, especially those in the Church of England who may be feeling that God might be calling them into communion with us, we have arranged an exploration Day called 'Called to be One' on 6<sup>th</sup>

September for which our Holy Father, Pope Francis, has promised his prayers and good wishes. The day at St Agatha's will begin with Mass at 11.am and end with Choral Evensong at 4.00pm. Please feel free to go along and see for yourself.

But we still need help in these early years if we are to grow and flourish. There will be a second collection after Mass today. If you are able, I hope you will consider making a contribution to help in our work and mission and if possible complete the form available at the back of the Cathedral so that we can gain a little more from the Inland Revenue. There are also leaflets at the back if you wish to support the Ordinariate on a more regular basis.

Those in the Ordinariate know the truth of the words in today's second reading from the Epistle to the Romans '**We know that by turning everything to their good God co-operates with all those who love him**'. Romans 8:28