

CHRISM MASS 14 April 2014

Sermon delivered by the Ordinary, the Rt Revd Monsignor Keith Newton

He has sent me to bring Good News to the poor Luke 4

They say actions speak louder than words and it is certainly true that people are more impressed with our sincerity if we act out our beliefs than merely talk about them. St James knew the truth of this when he wrote in his epistle **‘But some will say,” you have faith and I have works” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith’ James 2:18.**

Cardinal Nichols perceptively commented recently that you understand Pope Benedict by listening to what he says and Pope Francis by watching what he does. Certainly the press and other media respond more positively to visual images than just to words. Some of you may have seen the recent pictures of Pope Francis making his confession in St Peter’s Basilica before he began to hear those of other penitents. That simple act said more than countless homilies exhorting the faithful to avail themselves of the sacrament of reconciliation. It showed in a way that nobody could misunderstand that the Pope is in need of forgiveness just as much as the rest of us.

The Holy Father’s recent Apostolic Exhortation EVANGELII GAUDIUM amongst other things encourages us to put our faith into action if we are to serve the New Evangelisation. He reminds us that by virtue of our baptism we are called to be, in his phrase, ‘missionary disciples’- to be continually renewing our faith in Christ but aware that we are to be outward looking, taking the Good News of Christ out into the world not hidden behind the doors of the Church.

Every Baptized member of the Catholic faith is called to evangelize and is called to be a missionary disciple. He said

This is our vocation as Catholic Christians. It is what we are meant to be whether we are ordained or not, as St Catherine of Siena said:

If you are what you are meant to be you will set the world on fire

We cannot be mediocre or lukewarm in our response to God's overflowing grace if we are going to be missionary disciples.

This is an important thought as we gather together as priests and some faithful of the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham to celebrate the annual Chrism Mass. I want to put on record again our grateful thanks to the Apostolic Nuncio for so generously giving of his time to support our mission and to celebrate this mass for us.

A Chrism Mass in which the oils are blessed and priests renew their ordination vows is an important event in any diocese but particularly for us in the POOLW who are so scattered. I am particularly grateful for those of you who have travelled long distances to share in this Mass today. The Chrism Mass is a key moment as the communion we share with each other is expressed and renewed. In the recent meeting that I had at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, together with the Ordinaries from North America and Australia, the Prefect, Cardinal Gerhard Müller, emphasised the importance of creating what he called a 'culture of Communion'. It was this imperative for Unity, for communion, that led to the creation of the Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham over 3 years ago. He went on to say that we must both preserve the integrity and distinctiveness of the Ordinariate but at the same time be integrated into the wider Catholic Community. I think in practice the former is

more difficult than the latter as we endeavour to witness to the unity of our common faith but also express the possibility of diversity in its expression. This is really at the heart of our mission as Cardinal Müller describes the Ordinariate as an ‘eloquent expression of ecumenism’.

There is always the danger that in the joy of being part of the communion of the Catholic Church we can forget the vision that was set before us in the Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus*. It is to maintain the liturgical, spiritual and pastoral traditions of the Anglican Communion within the Catholic Church, as a precious gift nourishing the faith of the members of the Ordinariate and as a treasure to be shared’ *Anglicanorum Coetibus art III*. This is what is expected of us otherwise there was no reason to create the Ordinariate. It is this vision which we need to foster within our own communities and which we need to communicate both with our fellow Catholics, who are either ignorant of our presence or who cannot understand the point of it all, but also with our friends and former colleagues in the Church England and equally Anglicans who have lapsed from the practice of the Faith. It is an important work of ecumenism. In November this year we will celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the promulgation of the Second Vatican Council Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*. It bears reading again as it seems to me that the publication of the Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus* in 2009 put the thinking in that decree into practice for the first time in a tangible way. We are part of a great ecumenical project and we should be proud to be part of it.

However, we must be honest and say the Ordinariate has not grown as much as we hoped it might. The vision has not been caught. This means we must communicate our message much more widely and with more vigour and enthusiasm. It is for this reason we have set apart Saturday 6th September as an exploration Day when each cluster of Ordinariate groups should organise an event and invite those who might be interested to learn more about that vision for unity and truth in communion with the successor of Peter. We struggled a bit to find a name for the day which would give it some national identity. One was suggested 'Home to Rome' but we thought that might be a little too provocative. Instead it will be named 'Called to be One'. You will be hearing more about this in the coming months but for the time being please keep this initiative in your prayers. We have produced a prayer card for everyone which will be passed on to groups by our priest –coordinators.

I began by referring to the call by Pope Francis to be missionary disciples. When our Lord stood up in the synagogue in Nazareth and read from the prophet Isaiah, he did so quite deliberately making those words speak of his own ministry and mission; a mission now passed on to us. **'He has sent me to bring good news to the poor'. Luke 4:18** The Holy Father never tires of reminding us that the poor must be at the centre of our concerns; that is paramount but there are other sorts of poverty in the world beside material poverty. There is poverty in relationships, poverty of spirit, there is the poverty of a life lived simply for pleasure and for the present moment. There is the poverty of life without hope or faith. To be missionary disciples, to proclaim the faith in 21st Century Britain, is a daunting task. The knowledge of the Christian faith we once took for granted is no longer present. We can no

longer assume that the beliefs of Christians, particularly Catholic Christians, will be respected. Too often it seems that Christianity is only valued when it reflects the secular values of our present age. To proclaim the gospel in such situations requires courage but we do so in the knowledge that we do not do so unaided. He has sent his spirit to anoint and strengthen us. He gives us the spiritual armour to protect us and the spiritual weapons to fight courageously. Today we give thanks that he calls us into service as missionary disciples but particularly we give thanks for the priests who have a particular vocation within the life of the Church in equipping us all to do this so now I ask them to stand and renew their commitment in Christ's service.