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**Homily of His Eminence, Cardinal Víctor Fernández
for the Episcopal Ordination of Bishop David A. Waller,
Bishop of the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham**

Westminster Cathedral, London – 22 June 2024

I. The Gospel: Christ, the Good Shepherd (Jn. 10:11-16)

1. Of the various images the Lord used to represent his relationship with his disciples, the image of the Good Shepherd occupies a unique place in our Tradition because of its many rich nuances. A shepherd leads from within; he lives close to his flock, which knows his voice.

For this reason, in a sermon on today's Gospel, St. John Henry Newman explained that the image of the Good Shepherd reveals the tremendous love of Christ, who emptied himself, who became man, and who—from within humanity—guided us to the Father. [\[1\]](#)

2. In addition to what the image of the Good Shepherd shows us about *Christ*, it also conveys a very powerful message about *our role* in following him.

According to Newman, today's Gospel teaches us that it is not primarily *reason* that moves us to believe in Christ and follow his voice, but it is *love*. As Newman explained:

“*We believe, because we love.* [...] It is the doctrine, then, of [this] text, that those who believe in Christ, believe because they know Him to be the Good Shepherd; and they know Him by His voice.” [\[2\]](#)

As Newman and all of us who live our Faith know, listening to the voice of the Good Shepherd and following him touches upon every aspect of our lives and every day of our earthly pilgrimage.

II. The Role of the Bishop and Apostolic Succession

3. To help us hear the voice of the Good Shepherd and to follow him, the Lord appointed his Apostles as the first Pastors of his flock—starting with St. Peter, whom he commissioned to “feed my lambs” and “tend my sheep” (cf. Jn. 21:15-17). Here, we see the inseparable connection between Christ the Good Shepherd and the pastoral ministry he entrusted to his Apostles.

4. And this sacred mandate, to shepherd the flock in Christ's name, is passed on from generation to generation through the gift of *Apostolic Succession*.

This uninterrupted laying on of hands—from the Apostles to today—is one of the treasures our Catholic Church has preserved. It is an essential element of the treasury of Tradition that

St. Paul described in his First Letter to the Corinthians when he said, “*I received from the Lord what I passed on to you*” (1 Cor. 11:23).

And the episcopal ordination we celebrate here today becomes the most recent link in that sacred transmission, where we, the ordaining Bishops, can say, ‘what I have received from the Lord, I now transmit to you.’

III. The Meaning and Mission of the Ordinariate

5. The path toward full participation in the gift of Apostolic Succession—with all the other treasures that our Catholic Church has in fullness—has been a central part of the journey of this Ordinariate community.

To accommodate requests from groups of Anglicans who wished to enter into full communion with the Catholic Church, the Holy See established the Ordinariate as similar to a Diocese, which the Second Vatican Council defines as “a particular church in which the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and operative.”^[3]

6. At the same time, this “portion of the People of God” is structured to enable Anglicans, who were entering into full communion with the Catholic Church, to preserve elements of what Pope Saint Paul VI described as “the legitimate prestige and worthy patrimony of piety and usage” proper to the Anglican Communion.^[4]

7. These reflections highlight two crucial dimensions of the life of the Ordinariate. On the one hand, as an integral part of the Catholic Church, the Ordinariate has a mission to collaborate with other particular Churches “in which and from which the one and only Catholic Church exists.”^[5]

At the same time—in the words of the Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum coetibus*—the Ordinariate is invited to see the positive aspects of the Anglican tradition preserved in it “as a precious gift [...] and as a treasure to be shared.”^[6]

8. The existence of the Ordinariate, thus, reflects a profound and beautiful reality about the nature of the Church and the inculturation of the Gospel, as a rich English heritage.

For, the Church is one, and the Gospel is one, but in the process of inculturation, the Gospel is expressed in a variety of cultures. In this way, the Church acquires a new face, as Pope Francis teaches in *Evangelii Gaudium*:

“The history of the Church shows that Christianity does not have simply one cultural expression [...]. In the Christian customs of an evangelized people, the Holy Spirit adorns the Church, showing her new aspects of revelation and giving her a new face.”^[7]

In this process, the Church not only *gives* but is also *enriched*. For, as Saint John Paul II taught, “every culture offers positive values and forms which can enrich the way the Gospel is preached, understood and lived.”^[8]

9. In the case of the Ordinariate, the Catholic Faith is inculturated by people who experienced the Gospel in the context of the Anglican Communion. As they entered into full communion with the Catholic Church, it was enriched.

We can say, therefore, that the Ordinariate represents one of the faces of the Church, which, in this case, receives certain elements of the rich history of the Anglican tradition: elements that are now lived out in the fullness of Catholic communion.

IV. Collaboration in Full Communion

10. For this same reason, when considering the unique nature of the Ordinariate, we should also always see it in the broader context of its integral participation in Catholic *communion*. Because of this, to remain true, its ecclesial life must always work for the unity of the Church.

This happens when the Ordinariate prays, lives, and works in communion with other local Churches to favour the common growth of the spiritual life, fraternal life, and the work of evangelisation of the same territory.

This collaboration favours the vital “exchange of gifts” through which—as Pope Francis teaches—“the Spirit can lead us ever more fully into truth and goodness.”^[9]

11. In the case of London, the work of dialogue and collaboration implies, in the first place, an affective and effective communion with the Archdiocese of Westminster and with other local Dioceses.

In fact, Ordinariate priests already collaborate generously with parishes in this Archdiocese, and the same happens in other Dioceses across Great Britain. Yet, we can always grow in a spirit of dialogue and sharing, including concerning pastoral goals, in light of what Pope Francis proposes.

Also, in the spirit of communion, the presence of Cardinal Nichols, Bishop Lopes and Bishop Randazzo—as well as my own presence here—is a sign of the three essential relationships that define the Ordinariate: the relationship with the Holy See, with the local Dioceses, and with the other Ordinariates.

V. Intercession and Inspiration from Today’s Saints: St. Thomas More and St. John Fisher

12. As all of us, from near and far, gather to celebrate the ordination of Bishop-elect Waller, we are very blessed to do so in Westminster Cathedral, which is so central to the life of the Catholic Church here in England.

Seeing the relics and images of the saints commemorated here, we might well exclaim with Newman, “*Blessed are they who resolve—come good, come evil, come sunshine, come tempest, come honour, come dishonour—that [Christ] shall be their Lord and Master, their King and God!*”^[10]

13. Among the great English saints who lived out this resolve ‘until the end’ are the two saints we celebrate today: St. Thomas More and St. John Fisher.

St. Thomas More was born here in London and became the Lord High Chancellor of England, while St. John Fisher was the Cardinal Bishop of Rochester. In these two saints, we have a layman and a prelate: both very fervent in their love for Christ and their desire to communicate Him to others.

This is, in fact, what Pope Francis insists we must all do: to announce to everyone the love of God, manifested in the open arms of Christ, who today is active in our lives.

14. The intercession of today’s saints will be invoked in a special way by their inclusion in the Litany of Saints, as we ask for their prayers—together with those of all the saints—for the ministry of our new Bishop. The example of these saints also provides a helpful encouragement

and inspiration for him to follow the love and dedication of these saints in caring for the flock entrusted to him.

15. As Bishop-elect Waller assumes the responsibility of Bishop of the Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham, let us pray that he may always remain very close to Christ, the Good Shepherd. May he also remain close to his flock—with simplicity, kindness, and dedication—to guide them in Christ’s name. In all things, may he be a servant of the Gospel, after the heart of Christ.

For this mission, today he receives the fire of the Holy Spirit: the only one capable of transforming our hearts, healing our selfishness, and filling us with his fervour and with true joy in love.

[1] Cf. J.H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. 8, Rivingtons, London 1868, ser. XVI, 230ff. (cf. Phil. 2:7ff., Heb. 2:10).

[2] J.H. Newman, *Sermons, Chiefly on the Theory of Religious Belief, Preached Before the University of Oxford*, Rivington, London 1844, ser. XI, 229-230.

[3] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree *Christus Dominus* (28 October 1965), no. 11: AAS 58 (1966), 677. Cf. Benedict XVI, Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum coetibus* (4 November 2009), I § 3: AAS 101 (2009), 987; can. 369 *CIC*.

[4] Paul VI, *Homily for the Canonization of Forty Martyrs of England and Wales* (25 October 1970): AAS 62 (1970), 753.

[5] Can. 368 *CIC*. Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* (21 November 1964), nn. 13, 23: AAS 57 (1965), 17-18, 27-29.

[6] Benedict XVI, Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum coetibus* (4 November 2009), III: AAS 101 (2009), 987.

[7] Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), no. 116: AAS 105 (2013), 1068.

[8] John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Oceania* (22 November 2001), no. 16; as quoted in Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), no. 116: AAS 105 (2013), 1068.

[9] Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), no. 246: AAS 105 (2013), 1119.

[10] J.H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons, op. cit.*, vol. 8, ser. XVI, 243.