

Communication from Bishop of Oswestry
Read at Mass on Sunday 5th March

Dear Fathers, Dear Deacons, Dear Friends,

Praised be Jesus Christ, true God and true Man!

One month ago, I was ordained and consecrated to serve you as your Bishop, your Apostolic Father. I carry with me still the freshest memory of the Ordination Liturgy, most especially the laying-on-of-hands, the anointing with Sacred Chrism, and the placing upon my finger of the episcopal ring: 'Take this ring, the seal of your fidelity. With faith and love protect the Bride of Christ, his holy Church.' May the Lord make me a faithful and devoted spouse.

From the day of my episcopal ordination I have sought to venture forth, to be a Missionary Bishop out-and-about among his people. In this first month alone more than 1,500 miles have been clocked-up in the car manifesting this apostolic ministry among you. My priority has been to visit as many people as possible as soon as possible so that you might know the zeal, concern, and care your Bishop has for you. What a high privilege this has been, and with what warmth I have been welcomed! On each and every visit I have found deep faithfulness, rich devotion to the Saviour and his All-holy Mother, and the promise of new life and the seeds of a Catholic Renewal. Deo Gratias for all you do in the service of Christ the Saviour. In visiting, I have sought to give priority to those parishes most in need and most ignored. There are many more parishes to visit and people to meet, of course - the pastoral task is as enormous as the geography over which our wonderful family of churches is spread - but by God's grace and the prayers of Our Lady a good start has been made.

What has become immediately apparent is that in addition to the urgent need for pastoral care, there is also an urgent need for strategic attention. Pressing questions about the future configuration of priestly ministry in

and across our churches is an issue that has waited a long time to be addressed. As you will be acutely aware, dioceses are actively exploring proposals for reorganisation; and whereas we have usually been on the back foot in such matters (waiting to be done unto), it is imperative that we now get on the front foot and present proposals that will ensure a healthy, vibrant future of catholic life and witness in our churches. I am determined to bring forward constructive proposals to each of the diocesan discussions and am busily working with others to that end. As I pray for you unceasingly, I ask you to pray for me, and to pray with focused intention for these strategic conversations.

What is also evident to me after only one month is the need for the See of Oswestry to be sub-divided into four Pastoral Regions. Each Region will have a priest appointed to it to serve as Dean whose role it will be to share in my pastoral oversight of the clergy - in much the same way as an Area Dean might do - and to work with me in organising Regional Festivals, Chrism Masses etc. Such a dispersed See as ours can so easily lack a clear identity and coherence. The Pastoral Regions will serve to build a much stronger sense of identity and common life across the See of Oswestry. I will write to you again with further details about this.

And I have settled on my episcopal motto: *Gaudete in Domino semper!* The motto 'Rejoice in the Lord' captures perfectly the very spirit of paschal joy that I believe needs again to abound among us and within us, and which I wish to characterise my apostolic ministry among you. Only by a renewed sense of joy in the glory of the Saviour's cross, the triumph of the Saviour's resurrection, and the presence of the Saviour in his Most Holy Sacrament can we announce Christ the Saviour to the world. The Paschal Mystery is our proclamation : let us never tire to proclaim it in all its catholic and converting fullness.

Gaudete in Domino semper,

+Paul Crucis Osvaldi

Announcement made at St Johns Clevedon and All saints Weston on Sunday 5th March on behalf of the Archdeacon of Bath

As you are aware, Fr Brendan is currently the Interim Minister at St Johns, Clevedon until April 2024. All Saints Weston Super Mare, also a Society parish, has recently become vacant. Fr Brendan has been asked to also be the Interim Minister of All Saints WSM until April 2024 alongside his role at St Johns. This interim period will allow the current Deanery discussions about clergy deployment and possible pastoral reorganisations to continue and to conclude, before any permanent decisions are made. Fr Brendan has very graciously agreed to take up this extension to his interim ministry, This has taken place in consultation with the wardens of both parishes.

Inevitably, Fr Brendan will work closely with both parishes, their PCCs and officers, and seek to give appropriate and proportionate time to each as we discern the way forward and look for evangelistic and mission opportunities in the two communities

As those of you at St Johns already know, Fr Brendan is an excellent priest. He has done wonderful work at St John's over the last two years, and I trust he will be able to use his gifts to help grow the work at All Saints West Super Mare too. It is hoped to have Fr Brendan's licensing at All Saints Weston Super Mare on Wednesday 29th March.

***Ven Dr Adrian Youings
Archdeacon of Bath***