



**Pastoral Letter of the Bishop of Nottingham
appointed to be read at all Masses
on the Third Sunday of Lent,
Saturday 22 / Sunday 23 March 2014**

Dear friends in Christ,

Two weeks ago, on the First Sunday of Lent, those who will be baptised or received into the full communion of the Catholic Church this Easter gathered in Saint Barnabas' Cathedral for the Rite of Election. In this beautiful liturgy, those who wish to join us in the practice of the faith are 'elected' or 'called' to place their trust in God in a new and deeper way. I met them individually, and they signed the 'Book of the Elect'. This was an important moment for me, as I got to meet all those who will receive the sacraments of initiation at Easter.

I also gave each of them a candle and a prayer card, on which it was written:

May this candle be a light for you
to show me the way to follow you.
May it be, for me, the flame of Christ
to be passed on to all whom I meet.

As I met them one by one, with their parish priests and catechists, I asked everyone who received the card to pray that prayer each day during Lent, and promised that I would say the prayer myself every day. As the baptised People of God, we are all called to be 'the flame of Christ', burning brightly, bringing his light to the world, giving of ourselves to glorify the Lord in our daily lives.

The symbolism of the Rite of Election took on a new meaning for me this year, because the next day I was told by the Apostolic Nuncio that our Holy Father Pope Francis had chosen me to be the new Archbishop of Liverpool. Just as those who gathered in the Cathedral were 'elected' to share in the life of the Church in a new

way, so I am now also 'called' to do the same. This means that, on 1st May 2014, I will no longer be Bishop of Nottingham, and will take up the task of serving the Church in Liverpool, west Lancashire and the Isle of Man as her Bishop.

An important aspect of living the Christian life means that we must always be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit; as today's Psalm reminds us, we should listen to the voice of the Lord, and not close our hearts to him. As I have sought to do that in my life, my vocation has led me to serve the Church as a Dominican friar and priest; then, at Pope John Paul's request, it brought me to our Diocese, my home for the last thirteen years. Now, I must open my heart to a new and very real challenge. I am, naturally, truly sorry to be leaving you, and in a sense I wish it were otherwise.

I have done my best to serve you as your Bishop. If I have offended, angered or saddened anyone by anything I have said or done, I am sorry and ask your forgiveness. Just as I am grateful to the Holy Father for the trust which he has placed in me by asking me to take up a new ministry in the Church, I am grateful to you all for your trust, friendship and support. I have enjoyed very much the last thirteen years; there have been real challenges, but it has been truly uplifting to visit you in your parishes, churches, schools and universities, to share your life of faith and to thank you for all that you do.

Please remember me in your prayers, as I will remember you each day in mine. Please pray for all those who will have a role to play in choosing a new Bishop of Nottingham, and for the College of Consulters, who will look after the Diocese until your new Bishop is appointed. Whoever the new Bishop will be, he will be richly blessed; our Diocese has a well-deserved reputation for being a warm, friendly and welcoming Diocese, as I found out for myself when I came here in 2000.

Please pray for your priests, deacons and religious, who work so hard to guide and care for you, and for vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and religious life, that many more will listen to the voice of the Lord and offer themselves in his service.

Finally, please pray for yourselves, your families, your parishes and your friends. During my many visits throughout our Diocese, I find that the life of faith is being lived in so many different ways. In today's Gospel, Jesus reminds us that his food 'is to do the will of the one who sent me, and to complete his work'; there are many people, up and down our Diocese, who are completing his work in their daily lives.

Whenever we gather to celebrate Mass, prepare our younger parishioners for First Holy Communion and Confirmation, receive the sacrament of penance, take our children to school, work as lay chaplains in our hospitals, schools, prisons and universities, take part in pilgrimages, run social events in our church halls, visit the

sick at home and in hospital, read the Bible, or pray together in church or by ourselves in the privacy of our own homes, we are doing God's will. Whenever we do anything to live our faith, to deepen our hope and to share our love, we draw closer to Jesus. Our relationship with him is at the heart of our faith; it is thanks to his grace that we can live our faith in service of our brothers and sisters to the glory of God and our salvation.

Our parishes, churches, chaplaincies, schools and homes are places of real faith, imbued with our Catholic ethos. We are all called to be living stones, building up God's Church and proclaiming his Kingdom in all that we say and do, and that is true whether we are in Nottingham, Liverpool or any of the many Churches which make up the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church in which we each have a vital role to play. We are in God's hands, and he has called all of us; let us ask him to bless us and work in us.

With my prayers and every good wish for you and your families as we continue on our Lenten pilgrimage, and with my blessing for the future,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a small cross symbol followed by the name 'Malcolm' in a cursive script.

Most Rev Malcolm McMahon OP
Archbishop-Elect of Liverpool
Bishop of Nottingham



**Bishop's House
Nottingham**

March 2014