



**Pastoral Letter to be read at all Sunday Masses  
in the Diocese of Nottingham on 27 and 28 November 2010  
1st Sunday of Advent**

Dear Friends

There is no doubt that Pope Benedict's visit to the United Kingdom was an occasion of great happiness and joy for the Catholic Community but it has also had a remarkable and, I suspect, a lasting effect on British society. There is no doubt that religion is now a central feature of our culture.

Pope Benedict urged many different people in our countries to make every effort to achieve greater goals. He challenged the schoolchildren and young people gathered at St Mary's University College to strive for sainthood. 'Once you enter into friendship with God,' he told them, 'everything in your life will change.' In his meeting with people of other faiths he said we should walk 'side by side' where there is common ground but that we should not be afraid to dialogue 'face to face'. In Westminster Hall Pope Benedict touched on the moral vacuum in our society. Surprisingly he did not say that the Church has all the answers, instead, the answer to the question 'Where is the ethical foundation for political choices to be found?' was that it was to be supplied by reason, without the privilege of divine revelation. He went on to say that 'the world of secular rationality and the world of religious belief need one another and should not be afraid to enter into a profound and ongoing dialogue, for the good of our civilisation'. Undoubtedly these challenges will remain with all the people of the United Kingdom as we face the future avoiding political extremism which blighted the last century in Europe and throughout the world.

The sight of 80,000 people in Hyde Park in silent adoration of the real presence of Jesus is a memory that will stay in hearts of Catholics for many years to come, as will the beatification of Cardinal John Henry Newman whose motto 'Heart speaks unto Heart' became the motto for all British Catholics during those very significant days in September.

As well as being a happy time for Catholics the Pope's visit gave Catholics a new confidence. Catholics need not be afraid of showing their faith in public. I know that many of you are already 'up front' Catholics but others who are more timid about declaring their faith in public must surely now feel encouraged. The Catholic tradition is rich with ways of doing this. Archbishop Nichols has suggested that Catholics should not feel embarrassed to say grace before and after meals in public, or to bless themselves

when passing a catholic church. Following this lead our Diocesan Education Service is launching the Angelus Project in our Catholic schools which will promote The Angelus Prayer as a means of developing five themes from the Pope's speeches - communication, service, vocation, sainthood and prayer - throughout the Diocese.

Pope Benedict's overarching message on his visit to the UK, under the theme, 'Heart speaks unto Heart' was, above all, about growing in holiness, about responding to God's infinite love for each of us, about vocation. We are asked to ponder on what Newman refers to as the 'definite service' assigned to each one of us; to consider how we can all work for the building up of the Church, 'helping young people along the path of spiritual and human growth' and to encourage teachers and other professionals, 'never to lose sight of their calling to use their talents and experience in the service of faith...'

The Angelus reminds us most powerfully of the feast we are preparing to celebrate during this Advent season, that of Christmas, when the Word became flesh. But it also takes us beyond Christmas as we join with Mary in her fidelity to her Son, Jesus, throughout his earthly life by showing just how faithful we are to Him through our prayer and with acts of kindness and love.

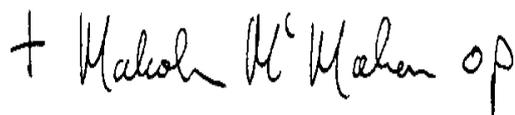
Today is the First Sunday of Advent, the beginning of a new liturgical year. So I ask you to make a New Year resolution to pray the Angelus everyday at 12 noon along with the staff, students and children in Catholic Schools throughout the Diocese of Nottingham.

In speaking directly to young people at Westminster Cathedral, Pope Benedict urged them to make time for prayer and to make space for silence in their lives for, '...it is in silence that we find God. And in silence we discover our true self. And in discovering our true self we discover the particular vocation which God has given us for the building up of his church and the redemption of our world.'

No matter where you are or what you are doing take five minutes out to pray the Angelus. I know it takes courage to do this, particularly if it is not convenient because of work or home commitments, but the witness value of you doing this is inestimable. Just think of the effect that your action will have on other Christians, people of other faiths and those who have no faith at all. To pray publicly or quietly in this way will enable us to build in a lasting way on the legacy of Pope Benedict's visit to us.

May your Advent be a holy time of peaceful preparation for the great feast of Christmas.

May God bless you all,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Malcolm McMahon OP". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

**Malcolm McMahon OP**  
**Bishop of Nottingham**

**11 November 2010**