



**Pastoral Message of the Bishop of Nottingham  
appointed to be read at all Masses  
on the Fifth Sunday of Lent,  
Saturday 16 / Sunday 17 March 2013**

My dear friends in Christ,

On 11 February 2013, we were all stunned when Pope Benedict XVI announced that, having repeatedly examined his conscience before God, he had come to the certainty that he no longer felt able to exercise the Petrine ministry. We pray for him in retirement, and we thank God for his many years of service as a priest, bishop and pope.

Last Wednesday, we witnessed with excitement and thanksgiving the election of Pope Francis. As a Jesuit, a priest and a bishop, Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio has amassed a great wealth of pastoral experience which he can now share with the universal Church. When he spoke to the crowds who had gathered in Saint Peter's Square for the announcement of his election, we could see on their faces that he has already endeared himself to the faithful by his humility, good humour and heartfelt request that they pray for him. By returning to the Roman residence where he had stayed before the Conclave to collect his belongings and pay his bill, he reflected Saint Peter's teaching that anyone in authority, especially bishops and priests, should 'Never be a dictator over any group that is put in your charge, but be an example that the whole flock can follow' (*1 Pet 5:3*).

Saint Francis of Assisi, from whom the Pope has taken his name, is reputed to have said, 'Proclaim the Gospel always and if necessary use words.' I am sure that Pope Francis will spread the Good News of Jesus Christ in all that he says and does, using his words wisely to promote in particular the Church's social teaching, with a message concerning the dignity of the human person, peace and justice which the world needs to hear more than ever.

In doing this, he will also reflect the vision of the first Jesuit missionary, Saint Francis Xavier, who travelled far from his homeland to proclaim the Gospel for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls.

I hope and pray that, in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council and in accordance with its teachings, Pope Francis will be for the People of God 'a visible source and foundation of unity in faith and communion' (*Roman Missal*, p. 1304), working collegially with his fellow bishops, confirming us in our faith, and entering a rich and fruitful dialogue with people of all faiths and none. In this way, he will truly be the Servant of the Servants of God, leading and guiding the flock now entrusted to his care.

Let us congratulate our Holy Father Pope Francis and thank God for giving him to the Church; but more importantly, let us pray for him, that he may have a long, blessed and joyful ministry as the Successor of Saint Peter.

With my prayers and every good wish for you and your families,

+ Malcolm

Right Reverend Malcolm McMahon OP  
Bishop of Nottingham



WOMAN OF FAITH <sup>2012</sup>/<sub>2013</sub>

**Bishop's House  
Nottingham**

**March 2013**