



YEAR OF THE BIBLE 2017

December 2016

## Pastoral Letter to Members of the Society in the Diocese of Chichester,

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This letter brings my greetings for the completion of Advent and the celebration of Christmas. May you be renewed in faith and joy and hope by the proclamation of the birth of Jesus Christ.

Before looking back, briefly, over the past year, and ahead to what is planned for the Society in 2017, I'd like to say something about the nature of this pastoral letter.

### Episcopal oversight and sacramental care

In most dioceses, those who seek the episcopal oversight and sacramental care of a bishop who stands in the succession that maintains the discipline of male ordination are under the care of a Provincial Episcopal Visitor. Every diocese is required to make that provision available to those who properly request it. In the diocese of Chichester I gladly offer that provision myself.

So this letter pastoral letter is not addressed to the whole diocese, but to those who share a common understanding of the truth revealed in Jesus Christ and held in ways that are bound by Catholic consent. May we always be seen as a distinctive and valued part of our diocesan household of faith whose deep-rooted contribution to apostolic life is practised joyfully, imaginatively, and humbly.

However, the oversight of those who hold this view and practice is not exercised by me alone. I wish to pay tribute to the bishops who support catholic parishes in so many ways. Bishops Alan Chesters, Michael Langrish, Nicholas Reade, Geoffrey Rowell, and Peter Wheatley give generously of their time and wisdom in encouraging the deepening and renewal of our Christian life. We all owe them our thanks and our prayers.

### Good things in 2016

Those who belong to any household need space and provision for their needs, together with recognition of the contribution that they make to the enrichment of that community. So it is with us, and as we look back on the past year, there are some very positive signs of the contribution from the Society parishes, from laity and clergy alike.

First, in the Year of Mercy, we have continued to draw attention to the enrichment of our life in Christ that comes from our commitment to Anglican and Roman Catholic dialogue and work for full visible communion. That communion will be brought about by the work of the Holy Spirit, rather than by Synodical or Vatican processes.

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In the attention to the Mercy of God for all people, we have been engaged in something that is the work of the Holy Spirit, promoting our contribution to the common good. Many parishes, groups and individuals, from within the Society and beyond it, have made the pilgrimage to Chichester Cathedral as part of the Year of Mercy, and been enriched spiritually.

Our own Society pilgrimage was an example of that; thank you to all who helped to organise it. Other forms of pilgrimage have also opened up attention to how we receive and share the mercy of God, and that too has been profoundly renewing across the diocese as a whole.

Second, we came together in large numbers at St Saviour's, Eastbourne, for a glorious Eucharistic Festival in June. Many people contributed to that happy day, not least the parish who hosted it. We are delighted that Fr Chris Yates has been appointed as the new incumbent of St Saviour's. We assure him and his young family of our prayers and good wishes as they settle back into English life, returning from Australia.

Third, large numbers have been on pilgrimage to Walsingham, not only in parish groups, but also taking part in the Children's and Youth Pilgrimages. Our diocesan group is among the largest at those two very special, and very demanding, events. This is important work in nurturing catholic faith in those who will shape the future of our parishes.

Finally, within the administrative life of the diocese, laity who are members of the Society have continued to contribute to our apostolic work, especially in education, nurturing vocations, finance, and representation on Deanery, Diocesan and General Synod. This is important work; thank you.

#### **And into 2017...**

There is a small planning group of clergy and laity who coordinate events for the coming year. If you have any enquiries about these arrangements, please contact Bradley Smith at [bradley.smith4@gmail.com](mailto:bradley.smith4@gmail.com) or me at [bishop@chichester.anglican.org](mailto:bishop@chichester.anglican.org).

#### **The Year of the Bible**

Saturday 25 February at Christ Church, Eastbourne, There will be a day conference on the Bible on beginning at 10.00 am and ending with Benediction at 4.00 pm. The Keynote Speaker will be Fr Peter Anthony, well known for his accessible, profound and sometimes entertaining presentations at the Walsingham Bible Week. The celebrant and preacher at Mass will be Bishop Geoffrey Rowell. Note: this is a learning day for everyone, not only clergy, and certainly not for Bible experts. Further details will be circulated after Christmas.

#### **Eucharistic Festival**

Saturday 3 June at St Barnabas, Bexhill

This festival will be sponsored by the local branch of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament. Everyone welcome, any age!  
Further details to follow.

#### **Walsingham Festival**

Saturday 14 October at Chichester Cathedral We welcome the Master of the Guardians, Bishop Philip North, and the Priest Administrator of the Shrine, Fr Kevin Smith to a regional festival. Please book the date and invite all your friends.  
Further details to follow.



The dates for the major pilgrimages to Walsingham, fixed and advertised by the Shrine, are:

The Children's Pilgrimage (10-12 March)

The National Pilgrimage (29 May)

The Youth Pilgrimage (7-11 August)

For details and all enquiries about these Walsingham pilgrimages, please contact Fr John Eldridge, [frjohn@live.co.uk](mailto:frjohn@live.co.uk)

In 2017 the National Pilgrimage has an ecumenical dimension that takes us to the heart of the message and vision of the Bible in its theme: "Thy Kingdom Come". I hope many people, especially in our own network of catholic parishes and associations will participate in the novena of prayer and devout reading of Holy Scripture that will form the Novena between Ascension Day and Pentecost. The intention of the Novena is the conversion of our native land.

The National Pilgrimage takes place on the Monday in the middle of that period. Please come on the National Pilgrimage, if you can. Please join in the Novena wherever you are; at home, in your parish, ecumenically with other Christians. Further details to follow.

Some of you do not belong to a parish that sponsors a parish pilgrimage to Walsingham or a coach that goes to the National Pilgrimage. We hope to produce a schedule of all parishes that are going on pilgrimage to Walsingham throughout 2017, and to indicate those that would be able to offer transport and companionship to people who otherwise could not go to England's Nazareth.

If you can advertise your parish pilgrimage as one that others from outside your parish would be welcome to join, please contact Bishop Nicholas Reade ([Nicholas.reade@btinternet.com](mailto:Nicholas.reade@btinternet.com)) who has agreed to coordinate a list. Details of this list and how to access it on a website will follow.

And about the clergy: in October next year the deacons, priests and bishops who, as incumbents, priests in charge, and curates, are committed to serving you, will be going on a conference that is intended to refresh and encourage us in your service. Please pray for your parish priests and the bishops who serve them in that month. Please pray that the Holy Spirit will sustain, inspire and strengthen us.

Please pray also for an increase of vocations to the priesthood, especially among young Christians, and among the men who will joyfully dedicate their lives to the faith that we have received and in which we find hope, unity, and foretaste of heaven.

Finally, may the song of the angels of peace, the simplicity of the shepherds, the joy and Mary and Joseph, and the love of the Christ Child fill your hearts and minds this Christmas.

Yours,  
+ M Martin

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