



POPE BENEDICT XVI

Farewell address of Archbishop Nichols to Pope Benedict XVI

Oscott College, Sunday 19 September 2010

Most Holy Father,

as we gather with you, together with our much loved apostolic nuncio, it is my joy to address you. This chapel holds a precious place in our history. It was here, in the first gathering of the newly appointed bishops, in 1852 that a new strategy for the Church in these countries was fashioned, a strategy which has proved to be enduring and fruitful. It centred on the importance of education in the faith and on the building up of parish life.

During the Synod, the imagination of the bishops was fired by the powerful preaching of Fr John Henry Newman, from that very pulpit. He was bold enough to speak of a new spring in the history of the Catholic faith in this place.

That historic moment has some resonances for us gathered here today. This moment with you is in a kind of 'Upper Room'. Here, in your guidance and blessing, we seek the inspiration of the Holy Spirit for our mission.

Time and again, you have spoken of the importance of the contribution of the Christian faith in our society, not least because, in your own words, 'if the moral principles underpinning the democratic process are themselves determined by nothing more solid than social consensus, then the fragility of the process becomes all too evident.'(Westminster Hall) We can already sense a new openness to this question, and to the role of faith communities, not only in the stance of the Government but also in the hearts and willingness of so many people. We will pursue and build on these opportunities for the common good of all.

In speaking to us you have urged young people to find their fulfilment in a love for Christ, a love which will show them that, first, they are loved by Him. That must be true for us too. You have urged our priests to be faithful to their ministry and we bishops to be fathers to our priests. This we will strive to do. You have meditated with us on the 'unity between Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, the Eucharistic sacrifice which he has given to his Church and his eternal priesthood' in which we participate in daily living. Your words point to our baptismal calling 'to bring the reconciling power of his sacrifice to the world in which we live.'(Westminster Cathedral)

In this context, you have encouraged us in our work of safeguarding and shown an open heart to those who have suffered through our neglect. For this we thank you. You have reminded us of the importance of sensitive care of the elderly, offered with deep respect and recognition of their spiritual journey. You have reached out to our friends in other faiths, committing us again to work with them and seeking from them an open and reciprocal dialogue. You have led us in prayer and dialogue with our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, strengthening our friendship and cooperation with them. The warmth and depth of our prayer together in Westminster Abbey will long remain in our hearts.

Holy Father, you give us new hearts for the tasks ahead especially in the wonderful gift of declaring John Henry Newman as a blessed model for us to follow. It is an English Parish Priest whom you have beatified and this,

for us, is the finest culmination of the Year for Priests. And, as we gather in this College chapel we recognise the importance of the work of fostering vocations and forming men to be the future generations of priests in these countries. This is a work to which we are deeply committed and I know you will give great joy to our seminarians when you greet them this afternoon before leaving.

Holy Father, in this Visit you are contributing richly to our history and to the shaping our future. You lift our hearts and reinvigorate us for our ministry especially in the example you give to us with your openness of heart, keenness of mind and gentle eloquence of expression in your unfailing witness to the mystery of Christ.

We take to heart your words that 'we need witnesses of the beauty of holiness, witnesses of the splendour of truth, witnesses of the joy and freedom born of a living relationship with Christ!' (Westminster Cathedral) This is our calling and we renew our dedication to it today.

Your visit to us was both State and pastoral but our farewell to you is entirely personal. We thank you on behalf of all the people of the United Kingdom for agreeing to spend this time in our midst. On behalf of the Bishops and Priests and the whole people of God in our country, I pledge our love and prayers for your vital and rich ministry in the Church and in the world. May Almighty God bless you, Holy Father, and inspire you in your service of love.

And may God bless you, Holy Father, and inspire you in your service of love. Amen.