



POPE BENEDICT XVI

Prime Minister David Cameron's Farewell Speech to Pope Benedict XVI

Birmingham International Airport, Sunday, 19 September 2010

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Your Holiness Pope Benedict, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

This ceremony brings to a close an incredibly moving four days for our country. Your Holiness, on this truly historic first State Visit to Britain you have spoken to a nation of six million Catholics but you have been heard by a nation of more than 60 million citizens and by many millions more all around the world.

For you have offered a message not just to the Catholic Church but to each and every one of us of every faith and none.

A challenge to us all to follow our conscience to ask not what are my entitlements, but what are my responsibilities? to ask not what we can do for ourselves, but what we can do for others?

Cardinal Newman, who was beatified here in Birmingham this morning, once said that one little deed whether by someone who helps "to relieve the sick and needy" or someone who "forgives an enemy" evinces more true faith than could be shown by "the most fluent religious conversation" or the most intimate knowledge of Scripture."

In his immense contribution to the philosophy of higher education Cardinal Newman reminded the world of the need for education for life not just for the workplace.

That broader education for life mattered because of the responsibilities of each person in society obligations and opportunities that came from what Cardinal Newman described as the "common bond of unity" that we all share.

Your Holiness, this common bond has been an incredibly important part of your message to us. And it's at the heart of the new culture of social responsibility we want to build in Britain.

People of faith – including our 30,000 faith-based charities – are great architects of that new culture.

For many, faith is a spur to action. It shapes their beliefs and behaviour; and it gives them a sense of purpose.

Crucially, it is their faith that inspires them to help others.

And we should celebrate that.

Faith is part of the fabric of our country. It always has been and it always will be.

As you, your Holiness, have said faith is not a problem for legislators to solve but rather a vital part of our national conversation.

And we are proud of that.

But people do not have to share a religious faith or agree with religion on everything to see the benefit of asking the searching questions that you, your Holiness, have posed to us about our society and how we treat ourselves and each other.

You have really challenged the whole country to sit up and think, and that can only be a good thing.

Because I believe we can all share in your message of working for the common good and that we all have a social obligation each other, to our families and our communities.

And, of course, our obligations to each other – and our care for each other – must extend beyond these shores too.

Your Holiness, in our meeting yesterday and in the discussions with the Papal delegation on Friday evening we agreed to develop the co-operation between this country and the Holy See on the key international issues where we share a common goal.

On winning the argument to get to grips with climate change.

On promoting a multi-faith dialogue and working for peace in our world

On fighting poverty and disease.

I passionately believe that we must continue to help the poorest, even in difficult economic times.

A yawning gap between the rich and the poor will be more dangerous and less secure for all of us.

So this country will keep its promises on aid.

We will work to hold other countries to their keep promises too.

And to make sure that money we spend on aid goes to those who need it most.

And I am delighted that the Holy See will be working so actively with us to do all we can to achieve this.

Your Holiness, your presence here has been a great honour for our country.

Now you are leaving us – and I hope with strong memories.

When you think of our country, think of it as one that not only cherishes faith, but one that is deeply, but quietly, compassionate.

I see it in the incredible response to the floods in Pakistan.

I see it in the spirit of community that drives countless good deeds done for friends and neighbours every day.

And in my own life, I have seen it in the many, many kind messages that I have had as I have cradled a new daughter and said goodbye to a wonderful father.

As we stand here in Birmingham, to bid you farewell let me return to the words of Cardinal Newman.

The Cardinal is greatly remembered here in Birmingham for his care for its people.

During a cholera outbreak in the city, he worked tirelessly among the poor and sick.

And when he himself died, the poor of the city turned out in their thousands to line the streets.

Inscribed on the pall of his coffin, was his motto "Heart speaks unto heart".

That has been the theme of this most special visit.

I hope it is a reflection of the welcome that you have received. It is most definitely a fitting tribute to the words you have spoken and the sentiments that you leave behind.

I wish you and your delegation a safe return to Rome.

And I look forward to ever closer co-operation between the UK and the Holy See as we redouble our resolve to work for the common good, both here in Britain and with our partners abroad.

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