

Homily for Mass of Installation *Arundel Cathedral, 28.v.15*



May I begin by adding my own words of welcome to those of Archbishop Peter. Thank you for being here for this great celebration, for this is a great day – the 50th Anniversary of the very day on which this Diocese of Arundel & Brighton was established. It is a real privilege and, I believe, a grace that this should be the day of my Installation as your 5th Bishop. As on Easter Day, we can say: “This is the Day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad.”¹

On Jubilee days, there can be a temptation to look back. We have much to celebrate at this time of Jubilee: the foresight of those who recognized the need for a new Diocese; the faithfulness of so many people, the commitment of the religious communities, the teaching in our schools, the service of priests and deacons, the leadership and vision of all my predecessors as Bishops: Bishop David, whose ring I wear today and whose crozier Archbishop Peter presented to me; Archbishop Michael – it is personal joy for me to welcome him here today, for he ordained me Deacon and Priest and was one of the principal consecrators at my ordination as Bishop; Cardinal Cormac – whom we welcome here today and who will speak to us at our Festival 50 celebrations in a few weeks time; Bishop Kieran, whose contribution in the field of evangelization within the Diocese and beyond has been very significant. We must also thank Archbishop Peter for all he has done for the Diocese in recent months, giving so much of himself to this Diocese along with his heavy responsibilities in Southwark.

While we rejoice in so much of these past years, we must also look forward and the Scriptures proclaimed for us today lay down both a challenge and source of consolation as we continue our pilgrimage together.

¹ Ps. 117:24.

There are times in all our lives when we experience difficulties as individuals and as families, weakness and pain as a Diocese too – but today let us re-commit ourselves to “the Word who is life – for this is our subject”.² For us as the Church in Arundel & Brighton – and for the Church everywhere – there is but one subject, the person of Jesus Christ. For it is Christ alone, through the union with Him to which we are called, that will make our joy complete. In our encounter with the One who loves us we, with the psalmist, know that “the Lord is good”.³

It is in Christ alone that joy and fulfillment lie, in the Christ who gave up everything out of love for us, whose love for us is without bounds, embracing death for us. The Christian is at home at the foot of the Cross – an uncomfortable truth – and our call is to take up the cross and follow in the footsteps of the One who is all love. It is there, too, that we are in the company of Mary our Mother.

We follow in this way not just for ourselves, but that all may “Taste and see that the Lord is good.”⁴ This, indeed, is the vocation of the Church that is this Diocese of Arundel & Brighton – the proclamation of God’s mercy in Christ. As Pope Francis reminds us, in the Bull of Indiction for the coming Jubilee Year of Mercy: “The Church is commissioned to announce the mercy of God, the beating heart of the Gospel, which in its own way must penetrate the heart and mind of every person.”⁵ It is Jesus, in His death and resurrection, who is the fount of mercy for all peoples. It is He, our subject, whom we must proclaim.

The effective proclamation of the joy of the Gospel demands commitment on all our parts. Like Jeremiah, we will not feel up to the task. Certainly, his expression of inadequacy is true for me today as I come before you as your new Bishop. But, as we – together – move forward in our proclamation of the Word who is life, God’s words to Jeremiah must remain always in our minds and hearts: “Do not be afraid – I am with you.”⁶

First and foremost, we must be continually renewed for the mission that lies before us. Let us commit ourselves to ever-deeper prayer, to times of silence where we can reflect on the message of the Gospel.⁷ Let us grow in our understanding of the gift of faith – not just at those key times of sacramental preparation, but through a life-long deepening in prayer and understanding. Through our participation in the Sacrifice of the Mass and through the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, may the Word who is life transform our lives.

It is through this nurture, this security within the sheepfold of Christ, that we grow in grace and are enabled to go out to others – and this is where the Gospel gets uncomfortable! We do not remain in the sheepfold. Jesus calls us out. We take up the cross and follow where He, the shepherd, leads – to the disadvantaged at home and abroad, to those suffering from injustice, to those trying to rebuild their lives, to the one released from prison, to the one living with

² 1 Jn.1:1.

³ Ps. 33:8.

⁴ Ps. 33:8.

⁵ Pope Francis, Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy *Misericordiae vultus*, n. 12. (Hereafter MV)

⁶ Jer. 1:8.

⁷ MV, n. 13.

mental or physical illness, to those who have lost hope and meaning in their lives, to those searching, perhaps even unknowingly, for God. Jesus himself calls us to the service of His mercy, that others may know Him who is our subject – that all may taste and see that the Lord is good – that all may know the nourishment and safe pastures of the sheepfold that is Christ, that “all may have life and have it to the full.”⁸

In laying down this call afresh today, be assured of my commitment to prayer for you, service to you and – with you – the proclamation of our one subject: the Word who is life.

⁸ Jn.10:10.