



***A Pastoral Letter - to be read out and
published in parishes on Sunday 10th June 2012***

8th June 2012

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Jesus prayed: 'May they be completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me.'

As Bishops standing in the Catholic tradition of the Church of England, we write to encourage and support all those who stand in that tradition.

The celebrations of the Queen's diamond jubilee have reminded us of the important bonds that exist within our nation between the monarch, the Church, and the people of this land. The celebrations have also underlined the value of tradition as something that is always alive and dynamic, while remaining true to its character and inheritance.

A sense of the dynamism of Christian tradition is familiar to us from other celebrations and texts. We speak of our inheritance of faith as one which "*the Church is called upon to proclaim afresh in each generation.*" These words are declared before every bishop, priest and deacon and congregation at ordinations and when new ministry is authorised by the bishop's licence.

Remaining faithful and obedient to this commission is a challenging task. The ordination of women has opened up divisions over what is and what is not a legitimate development of our inheritance. We shall see those divisions played out again at the General Synod in July. We believe that the Church of England must keep its pledge to recognise that many in the Catholic tradition cannot in conscience receive the sacramental ministry of women priests and bishops.

How are we to face the tensions of that debate? What positive message do we as Anglo-Catholics have to give to the Church and to our nation about our distinctive contribution to the dynamics of our Church, and particularly the call to holiness, a growing into the likeness of Christ, which has been so much part of the tradition of catholic spirituality?

Firstly, we must say something about diversity. At the heart of our theological tradition is an acceptance that the Church of England is enriched by the range of viewpoints within its spectrum. We are committed to the recognition of this diversity and to the liberty that protects it. Of course, the defence of liberty is one of the functions of justice and law, of which the monarch is guardian and symbol.

Secondly, we assert that respect for this diversity needs to find expression in unity as the foundation for our mission, not only as Anglicans, but also with other Christians. We have the task of patient reiteration that truth, not personal preference, commits us to referencing the inherited wisdom of Catholicism in the great traditions of East and West. Arising from this, our search for unity will commit us to continuing engagement with the ARCIC process and dialogue with the Orthodox Churches.

Thirdly, we must commit ourselves to the recovery of a vision for mission that interacts confidently with present and future realities. Recovery of confidence begins with realistic and humble engagement in the experiences and spiritual hunger of today's increasingly diverse and un-Churched society. In this, we may also have to acquire the humility to learn from the wisdom of others about how to interpret and use our distinctive inheritance of faith and practice.

We have a future; the seeds of renewal are sown within us.

The tensions of the next few weeks must not distract us from the task that lies beyond the General Synod vote on women bishops. Here is a call to action, to build afresh. The issue is simply one of vocation – new Christians entering our congregations, the confident nurturing of young people to train for priesthood and lay ministry.

As bishops we commit ourselves to work with you and for you in the months and years ahead to meet these challenges. Let us form a future in the Church of England that is better together in its defence of freedom, respect, diversity and unity, in order to be effective in our worship of almighty God, service of others, and converting articulation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Yours in Christ,

+Jonathan Baker

+Norman Banks

+John Ford

+John Goddard

+Martyn Jarrett

+Nicholas Reade

+Tony Robinson

+Geoffrey Rowell

+Mark Sowerby

+Martin Warner

+Peter Wheatley

+Lindsay Urwin

Bishop of Ebbsfleet

Bishop of Richborough

Bishop of Plymouth

Bishop of Burnley

Bishop of Beverley

Bishop of Blackburn

Bishop of Pontefract

Bishop in Europe

Bishop of Horsham

Bishop of Whitby (Chichester designate)

Bishop of Edmonton

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Next Steps:

- **As many of us as possible will be present at the General Synod together with members of the Catholic Group in General Synod and our media advisors.**
- **In the days following the Synod, we shall meet with you locally.**
- **Together with the leadership of some of the Catholic Societies, we will then meet on:**

Thursday 19th July	Christ the King, Gordon Square
Saturday, 13th October	FiF National Assembly
- **We as bishops will meet together on:**

Wed, 12th to Thurs 13th September	College of Bishops, Oxford
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