



**Pastoral Letter of the Bishop of Nottingham
appointed to be read at all Masses
celebrated on the Fourteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time
Saturday 4 / Sunday 5 July 2015**

Dear friends in Christ,

I am very conscious that only a limited number of people, from across the Diocese, were able to be present in the Cathedral on Friday for my Ordination as your new Bishop; and so I am pleased to have this opportunity today to share a few initial thoughts with you all.

I wish to begin by expressing my sincere gratitude to Monsignor Tom McGovern, who has been a most able and generous Diocesan Administrator for the past fourteen months; as a Diocese, we owe him, and many others – priests, deacons and laypeople, too numerous to name – a huge debt of gratitude for the different ways in which they have ensured that the mission of the Church was well served during this period. I am also very grateful to Father Andrew Cole, the Bishop's Private Secretary, and Canon Geoffrey Hunton and his team at St Barnabas' Cathedral, for their hard work in planning and organising so well my Ordination as a Bishop. Everyone in the Diocese can rightly be proud of such a prayerful and joyful celebration. I am delighted too that many of you were able to watch it streamed to your home, parish hall or school.

Since I arrived in Nottingham, I have felt greatly supported by the very warm welcome, kindness and prayers that I have received from so many of you across the Diocese. Thank you for this – and please be patient with me as I slowly begin to learn the ropes about how to be a Bishop!

Before my appointment as your Bishop, I was a priest of the Archdiocese of Birmingham, and served there for many years in a variety of roles. I have come to you

directly from a large and active parish where, for the past nine and a half years, I have served happily as parish priest. It is a ministry that I have loved, and I know how much I always appreciated the prayerful support and active involvement of the parishioners there. So please do pray for the priests, religious and deacons who serve so generously in your parishes, and continue to give them your support as they seek to harness the faith, energy, skills and gifts of all parishioners in service of the Church's missionary work. As your new Bishop, I certainly want to do all that I can to encourage and strengthen the good outreach that is going on in parishes, and also in schools, chaplaincies and religious houses across the Diocese.

As you know, the Diocese of Nottingham covers a very large geographical territory. Most of it is, as yet, unknown to me, with the exception of a few areas where, over the years, I have enjoyed some good walks on my days off. But, over the coming months, I very much look forward to getting to know the Diocese better. I intend, whenever possible, to visit parishes at weekends, beginning with those parishes furthest away from the Cathedral, as well as those to which I will come to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation or celebrate other special occasions.

I feel very blessed to begin my ministry among you with some grace-filled occasions. This Sunday, in the Cathedral, I will institute to the ministry of acolyte Peter Astill, Christopher Blunt, David Knight, Domnhall Lavery, Warren Peachy and Joboy Sebastian, who, please God, next year will be ordained to serve our Diocese as permanent deacons; next Saturday, I will have the joy of ordaining David Bowler, Richard Edey, Kevin Gradwell and Jonathan Rose to the priesthood. Please keep them in your prayers, and also Kevin Athaide, who is to be ordained priest in September. Then, in just over a week's time, I will be travelling with the diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes; please know that I will remember you all in prayer there, and will particularly ask the intercession of Our Lady for all who are ill in any way and unable to travel to Lourdes.

I have chosen as my episcopal motto: 'Seek the face of Christ.' It will remind me that, if we are to be faithful to our calling from the Lord 'to make disciples of all the nations' (cf. *Mt* 28:19), we must first get to know Christ Jesus personally as our Saviour, through time spent before him in adoration and prayer. Only then, in the power of the Holy Spirit, will we know his support in sharing joyfully our faith with others. Christ invites us first to become his disciples, listening to him in prayer and allowing ourselves to be guided by his teaching in the Scriptures, so that he may then send us out as his Spirit-filled missionaries, who seek his face in those we meet – especially those searching for meaning in their lives, and those who may feel very distant from the Lord.

Pope Francis has called for a Jubilee ‘Year of Mercy’, which is to begin later this year in every diocese throughout the world. He reminds us that Jesus Christ is the face of the Father’s mercy, and throughout this Year he is inviting us, in prayer, to gaze even more attentively on God’s mercy, so that we might become a more effective sign to others of the Father’s loving mercy. What a wonderful challenge he sets before us – to open ourselves afresh to the mercy of God, so that we might share that mercy with the people we meet in our daily lives!

I believe that the ‘Year of Mercy’ will greatly help us, as a Diocese, to engage with the more missionary aspects of the diocesan renewal programme, *You are living stones*, initiated by Bishop Malcolm. He made clear that this programme is not only about encouraging parishes to work together; rather, it is primarily about encouraging and enabling all aspects of our Diocese to be more outward looking, to be more missionary, and to work with others in service of the common good. There is still to be found, in many of the people with whom we live and work, a real thirst to know more about Jesus Christ. The invitation from Christ to us all, in and through our Baptism, is to bear witness, individually and together, to God’s merciful and liberating love – to share with others the difference, the freedom and the joy that Jesus makes to our lives.

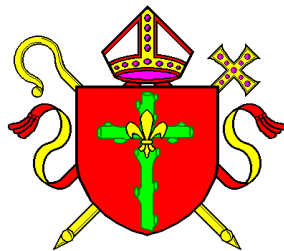
As I begin my time among you as your Bishop, I find so comforting these words of Christ to St Paul in the Second Reading at Mass today: ‘My grace is enough for you: my power is at its best in weakness’ (2 Cor 12:9). They powerfully remind me that our true strength comes always from God. It is his grace that will sustain us in all our weaknesses, our self-doubts, and in our struggles to bear witness to our faith in Christ. When we know our human weakness, but place our trust and confidence in the Lord, a power not our own – his power – grows within us and enables us to do things that, by our own strength, would simply be impossible.

So please join me in prayer, that we may seek from the Lord his grace, as we embark together upon this new chapter in the life of the Diocese, and also the guidance of his Holy Spirit, as we seek to discern how best to respond to the vision and challenge that Pope Francis is setting before us in the ‘Year of Mercy’.

Please pray for me as I begin my work among you, and know that you and your families are always in my prayers.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Patrick". The plus sign is a simple cross, and the name "Patrick" is written in a cursive, slightly slanted font.

Rt Rev Patrick McKinney
Bishop of Nottingham



**Bishop's House
Nottingham**

July 2015