

## LETTER TO

### THE CLERGY, RELIGIOUS AND LAY PEOPLE OF THE DIOCESE OF LEEDS

My Dearest Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Last week, I learnt of my appointment by His Holiness, Pope Francis, as the 10<sup>th</sup> Bishop of the Diocese of Leeds. I am overwhelmed at the trust which the Holy Father has placed in me.

I have written to the Holy Father and assured him, as the Successor of St Peter and Supreme Pontiff of the Catholic Church, of my loyal and filial love, and of my intention to give myself entirely to the service of the Diocese of Leeds.

I am only too conscious of my weaknesses and sinfulness. It is therefore with humility and the desire to obey the call to serve, in whatever way the Church asks of me, that I have accepted this appointment. Before all else therefore, I ask for your prayers for me. Throughout my ministry as a priest, I have been sustained in grace by the prayers of the parishioners and religious that I have been privileged to serve and by the prayers of my brother clergy in the Archdiocese of Birmingham. This is the first thing for which I hope; to be assured of your prayers. And from now on, I assure you, for my part you will be in the first thoughts of my prayers each day.

The second thing for which I hope is to be able to express as strongly as I can, my thanks. Thanks to my predecessors, Archbishop Arthur Roche and Bishop David Konstant, on whose firm legacy I can only hope to build; and, my thanks to Mgr. John Wilson, the Chapter of Canons and all the clergy and lay people who have given untiring and generous service in leading and caring for the Diocese of Leeds over the past two years. I know that I will need to listen carefully to their wise counsel and advice both before and after my ordination as bishop.

The third thing for which I hope is for your patience and support. I am sure that my name will be quite unknown to the vast majority of the clergy, religious and lay people of the diocese. Consequently, I hope that you will be patient with me as I get to know the clergy, religious, parishes, schools and the whole area of the Diocese of Leeds. I pray too, that you will support me not only by your prayers but also by your collaboration in the important work of evangelisation, to which all those who have received the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation are called; and, in making known to all those people who touch our lives, the infinite mercy of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

When I was informed of my appointment, I was given a list of tasks that require fairly quick decisions from me. Among these, was the need to choose a motto for my life as a bishop. However, I needed no time to ponder on this. Many years ago in Rome, on the day of my ordination as a deacon, and just before I made my solemn ordination promises, the late Cardinal Basil Hume said to me,

“Let the words of Our Lord ring in your ears, ‘I have longed and longed to be with you’. Carry these words not only throughout your diaconate but into your priesthood; then, you will discover that peace, that joy, in the service of the servants of the Lord.”

Since then, those words have been imprinted deep upon my heart. *Desiderio desideravi*, ‘I have longed and longed to be with you’, or ‘I have desired with desire to be with you’, the words as written in St Luke’s Gospel (22:15) which Our Lord spoke to his apostles as he sat down with them at the Last Supper.

During his homily, Cardinal Hume had used those words to express the great desire and intimacy with which Our Lord wishes to share His divine life and love with each one of us. That life and love is offered freely to all men and women. If in faith we accept that life and love, we have no need to be afraid, we can bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, and endure all things. It is that message which I have tried to make central to my ministry as a priest and which I hope and pray will continue to be at the centre of my new ministry as a bishop. So, *Desiderio desideravi* will be my motto.

Looking ahead, I place all my trust in the love and infinite mercy of Our Lord Jesus Christ and in the powerful intercession of His Blessed Mother, Our Lady of Unfailing Help.

Please pray for me as I prepare for my episcopal ordination and be assured of my prayers for you.

Yours devotedly in the Lord,

Marcus

Mgr. Marcus Stock  
Bishop-Elect of Leeds