

**EPISCOPAL ORDINATIONS
+DAVID EVANS +STEPHEN WRIGHT
ST CHAD'S CATHEDRAL 9 OCTOBER 2020**

We have received the Spirit that comes from God, to teach us to understand the gifts that he has given us.

Today's celebration is truly notable on several counts. It is a moment of exceptional joy for the life of our Archdiocese to receive from the Holy Father the gift of two new bishops who will serve the clergy and the whole People of God.

For bishops-elect David and Stephen their vocations have arisen within the diocesan presbyterate to which they have each belonged for forty-two years and twenty years respectively. They know that they can count upon the prayers of their brother priests who are represented in the Cathedral today or participating through the livestream.

You also know that you are being welcomed into the College of Bishops by Bishop William and Bishop David, alongside Bishop Patrick McKinney, Mar Joseph Srampickal and Bishop David Oakley here in the Cathedral, and Bishop Philip Pargeter, Cardinal Vincent and many other brother bishops who are following the ceremony online.

This may well be the first time that two bishops have been ordained together in St Chad's Cathedral, in a way that emphasises the ecclesial nature of what is taking place. While the grace of this sacrament must build upon the natural gifts of these two priests, it is always given first and foremost for the service of the faithful of Christ, lay and ordained together.

In his Letter to the Corinthians St Paul reminds us: *We have received the Spirit that comes from God, to teach us to understand the gifts that he has given us.* In order to understand we must practise listening – the patient and careful listening that bears fruit when we pray – the listening that lies at the heart of obedience.

At our recent priestly ordinations here in Birmingham I said that the attitude of obedience is precious to everyone who is ordained, whether bishop, priest or deacon. It enables him to listen for the pointers of God's will in his own life and in the lives of others.

Bishops-elect David and Stephen, I would invite you in your new episcopal ministry to listen obediently to the Word of God in the scriptures and in your prayer. Try to tune your ear to what you may hear of God's voice speaking not only through those you respect and trust but also through people whose words or attitudes you may not always find it easy to accept.

As a pastor you will naturally feel drawn to some people more than to others - perhaps those who share your spiritual outlook on life or your sense of the Church's mission and its priorities. Always try to recognise those natural likes and dislikes so that you can be a dispassionate and compassionate friend to all. This will help you to be a servant of unity within the Archdiocese. You already know as priests that you will have to sacrifice some of your own preferences to remain faithful to your vocation to serve.

Another very significant feature of today's ordination is that it is the first time since his Canonisation last October in Rome that we have celebrated the Feastday of St John Henry Newman. Not only by his teaching, but also by the example of his priestly ministry he offers a model for everyone ordained to serve in the Church today.

The bishop's ministry of teaching, sanctifying and governing after the heart of Christ is illustrated in one of Cardinal Newman's sermons reflecting on the ministry of St Paul: *He loved his brethren, not only "for Jesus' sake" but, to use his own expression, for their own sake also. He lived with them and for them; he was anxious about them; he gave them help, and in turn he looked for comfort from them. His mind was like some instrument of music, harp or viol, the strings of which vibrate, though untouched, by the notes which other instruments give forth, and he was ever, according to his own precept, "rejoicing with them that rejoice, and weeping with them that wept"; and thus he was the least magisterial of all teachers, and the gentlest and most amiable of all rulers.*

Cardinal Newman's evocative reference to the strings of the harp reflects his own capacity for empathy and he explained in a letter to John Keble in October 1865 why he regarded this as such a central Christian virtue: *The first duty of charity is to try to enter into the mind and feelings of another.*

Your new ministry as bishops will range widely across the seven cities and five counties of this Archdiocese and you will make an impression within the communities you visit. As you preach and administer the sacraments, as you support the clergy and look for solutions to the problems that may arise from time to time, try to recall the wisdom of Cardinal Newman when he wrote: *Your **life** displays Christ without your intending it. You cannot help it. Your **words** and deeds will show on the long run (as it is said) where your treasure is and your heart. Out of the abundance of your heart your mouth speaketh words "seasoned with salt".*

St John Henry reminds us that the way that we are perceived by others as deacons, priest and bishops will often have an impact on the development of their faith - although we may never see it and it may not always correspond with our intentions. But it will always be a factor in the pastoral ministry conferred on you today.

Cardinal Newman's pastoral concern for others extended well beyond his direct contact through visiting and preaching. The many volumes of his letters testify to the concern that he carried with him wherever he was. In one letter, written from Switzerland to Marieanne Bowden, we can see the tenderness of his pastor's heart – we can also hear an echo of his own experience of God's love. I hope that these words will inspire confidence and courage in you as you respond to Our Lord's call.

...put yourself into the hands of your loving Father and Redeemer who knows you and loves you better than you know or love yourself. He has appointed every action of your life. He created you, sustains you, and has marked down the very way and hour when He will take you to Himself. He knows all your thoughts, and feels for you in all your sadness more than any creature can feel, and accepts and makes note of your prayers even before you make them. He will never fail you - and He will give you what is best for you. And though He tries you, and seems to withdraw Himself from you and afflicts you, still trust in Him, for at length you will see how good and gracious He is, and how well He will provide for you...Be courageous and generous, and give Him your heart, and you will never repent of the sacrifice.