ARCHBISHOP *of* CARDIFF

ARCHESGOB CAERDYDD



BISHOP *of* MENEVIA

ESGOB MYNYW

Pastoral Letter to the Archdiocese of Cardiff and the Diocese of Menevia

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Byddwch lawen (Be joyful)!

This phrase was one of the last that Saint David shared with his followers. It is a phrase which has continued to inspire me as I have travelled across our two Dioceses these past eighteen months. It has been a joy to experience something of the life of faith and witness, present at local level in our parishes, schools and communities.

We recall these words – "be joyful" – on this Gaudete Sunday, when St Paul reminds us in the scripture reading to "be happy at all times" (1 Thessalonians 5:16).
We know what it is that gives us joy. I remind us all, "Jesus Christ loves you:
He gave his life to save you: and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you" *(Evangelii Gaudium 164).* It is the Person of Jesus who is at the heart of our life. Coming closer to Him and sharing Him with others: this is our greatest joy.

Having listened to many and having visited many communities, I believe we are now at a point where I would like us to look together at how we can be more "audacious in mission", as the Holy Father has asked us to be. So, I invite everyone across the two Dioceses to embark with me on a journey of consultation and listening to one another, in order to look at the possibility of drawing the two Dioceses of Cardiff and Menevia together into one Diocese.

In the early months of 2024 I am holding a series of Open Listening Sessions across both Dioceses. The purpose of those gatherings will be to come together in the joy of our faith, in the different parts, to see how we might be a local Church which looks outward much more, to share the faith with those who do not believe, and to look at how we put our resources at the service of those most in need. For the Lord sends us, "to bring good news to the poor, to bind up hearts that are broken; to proclaim liberty to captives, freedom to those in prison, to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord." (Isaiah 61: 1-2).

Any proposed union of our two Dioceses would be so that we can "take an account of a constant orientation towards mission" *(Synodal Synthesis 12.a)*. By sharing

resources and by supporting one another, I believe we can give a more credible witness to Jesus Christ in our society and communicate Him more effectively, both in our own faith and in the good works that we undertake.

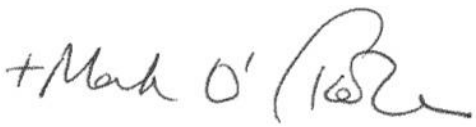
No final decision has been made. It is ultimately a decision for the Holy Father, following this open listening and consultative phase. I should say that, since being appointed here, the two Dioceses being united *'in persona Episcopi'* (in the person of the Bishop), the uniting of the two has emerged, for me, as the most likely next step that we need to take together. Before making any recommendation to the Holy Father, I want to listen to you – our lay people, religious and clergy.

I hope you feel able to come to one of the meetings, the dates of which will be on the websites shortly, together with other background information on the process. This will also be made known through your local parish. Having encountered Jesus and having experienced something of the depth of His love in our lives, we know we have no option other than to help others come into this experience too. Jesus is "an event" which has happened in our lives and we want others to encounter Him, too. Our ongoing encounter with Him is the only thing which brings real meaning and purpose to our lives. Trying to help others come into this encounter with Jesus is not just one more task among all other things we have to do, it is the heart of what we do. It is the standard against which we judge all that we do.

I have shared something of what is on my heart at this time. I believe we can move forward together more effectively by uniting our two Dioceses. Yet it is really important for me to listen more to your experience of the faith across South Wales and Herefordshire. I humbly ask you to walk with me on this path so that together we can enter more fully into Jesus' life and help others to do so too, so that the good news of the Christ child is communicated to the whole world.

As we approach the wonderful Solemnity of His Birth among us, I pray that this may be a time of peace and blessing for you and your loved ones. I appreciate some of the challenges that we are living through – globally, nationally and personally. Let us draw closer to Him who is our joy and our peace. I ask you too, to pray for me.

Yours devotedly



Most Rev Mark O'Toole
Archbishop of Cardiff
Bishop of Menevia