

Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI announces new Archbishop of Birmingham

1 October 2009

Interview with Bishop Bernard Longley

On hearing the news...

When I heard the news that I had been appointed by the Holy Father to be the Archbishop of Birmingham, I was really very taken aback. It was, as you can imagine, the last thing that I had ever supposed. But really thinking about it, I feel very humbled and enormously honoured at having been appointed to succeed Archbishop Vincent Nichols in that post.

The legacy of Archbishop Vincent Nichols

I'm very conscious of the tremendous legacy that he leaves; the leadership, the pastoral guidance that he's given to the Diocese [Birmingham] over these many years.

Leaving Westminster

I think one of the things that I will certainly take with me from being in Westminster is the welcome I received.

[There are] many happy memories that I will take with me. It won't be easy, I think, to leave this Diocese which has become my home and where people have become my friends. But I know those friendships continue and they will be a tremendous support, especially the prayers of friends and their support in the months and the years ahead.

Looking Forward

I'm looking forward to getting to know the Archdiocese of Birmingham and looking ahead to the coming years, I know that I will need time to look; to listen, to understand and to get to know the place well.

Beatification of Cardinal John Henry Newman

One of the wonderful things that we are all looking forward to next year is the Beatification of Cardinal John Henry Newman – as an example and an inspiration to Catholics within the Diocese, as well as beyond, in the UK and indeed across the world, English speaking Catholics, especially. Cardinal Newman's Beatification, I think will be a moment for many blessings.....

The visit of the relics of St Thérèse

It has really been quite remarkable. I think the way in which faith has been strengthened; the numbers of people who have been visiting the cathedrals and churches and convents where her relics have rested.

[The visit has] emboldened us to speak of our faith and indeed to speak about the importance of the Communion of the Saints.

Possible papal visit

Looking ahead to the possibility of a papal visit to England and Wales, I think also that moment of unity with the Successor of Peter will be something to inspire people in every dimension of the Church's life.

Priorities for the Catholic Church in England and Wales

To give a clear voice to the teaching of the Church and to express the love of Christ, especially by reaching out to those who are in need. To support our many agencies who are actually looking after people in need.

The beginning, the end of life and indeed the quality of life – the Catholic Church has a clear message and also has the people and the will to support those people who wish to live according to that message.

[Another priority is] preaching the Gospel alongside our Christian brothers and sisters, in an effective way. But I think also within the Catholic community, reaching again to those families who have traditionally been part of our community and for whatever reason are no longer fully at home within the Church or the local parish community. That's a challenge - to find ways of reaching and touching those families who have a Catholic heritage, but who don't always feel confident about living according to it today.

Relaxing in Birmingham

Music and a little bit of outdoor exercise, something I need. [Both] are going to be important for me. I hope to be able to continue a little bit of singing; I have to find a good accompanist in Birmingham – I shall be on the look out!