

THE BISHOP OF GRANTHAM'S LETTER FOR PARISH MAGAZINES: OCTOBER 2011

Dear friends

Unless we've been living a particularly hermitic life of late, we should now be well aware that we are welcoming a new Bishop of Lincoln and are all looking forward to introducing Christopher Lowson to our wonderful County of Lincolnshire. It is a time, at his consecration to the episcopate and subsequently his enthronement here in Lincoln Cathedral, when the Church can be relaxed about being a little triumphalist and we can enjoy the unparalleled acts of worship, the holy ceremonies and the dignified pomp. For the arrival of a new Bishop, nay the inauguration of the fresh ministry of any minister of whatever position, is a time for rejoicing as the old gives way to the new and we begin to be invigorated by what comes next in the life of the Church. It is wonderful that, in a contemporary society supposedly so secular and unconcerned about the things of God, men and women still lay their lives on the altar of service to God and to others through ordination: not just bishops, but priests and deacons and a host of others. For this is the real source of our rejoicing at the inception of a new ministry: that God's love will be revealed in this newly dedicated life. So let's enjoy this time and pause to remind ourselves what it is all about when the Parish Share has been paid, the roof put back on the church building and the church rotas written: 'God is love, and those who live in love live in God, and God lives in them'.

And what about you and I? There will be those who welcome a new Bishop because they expect an omnipotent, omnipresent prelate who will right all the supposed wrongs of the Church and, within weeks of his arrival, our churches will be full once more and everything will be as we always wished it to be. In our heart of hearts, we all know that this is an unrealistic expectation of any human being and possibly cruel to the recipient of such exaggerated projections. Perhaps more properly, there will be those who warmly welcome a fellow worker for Christ into the life of a Diocese which has had an ongoing life for many centuries and which seeks to grow into the future. Yes, bringing the best out of its Episcopal leader, but also pledging our own efforts, love and ministry so that the best may be brought out of all us for Christ and his Church.

And what is this 'best' that I speak of. In all his utterances, commands and teachings, Jesus always urged his first disciples to look outwards in love on the world: unconcerned about their needs, it was the healing and service of other lives that brought life and vitality to his Church. And so it is for us today who are now fellow servants with the first disciples. When the narrow needs and issues of the Church are all that concern us, we wither and perish: when we look outward in love and service we thrive.

And perhaps this is the real reason that we rejoice and party at the start of a new Bishop's ministry because, above all, it symbolises the constant outpouring of God's love in His world and the opportunity for the Church, Bishop and people alike, to both receive and show that divine love in their life as his Church together.

Yours in His love,

The Rt Revd Dr Tim Ellis, Bishop of Grantham

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