

## **HOMILY FOR MASS OF INSTALLATION**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ and friends one and all. These days I've been learning everything I can about the Diocese and City of Peterborough by surfing the Internet. It's a great way to gather information, and some of it, I'm sure, is even true. It was on the Internet that I was able to glean some knowledge about this beautiful Cathedral, St. Peter-in-Chains. I was heartened to learn that the cathedral has had not only a long history, but also many alterations including a doubling in size in 1884. That reassures me that it should be able to withstand still one more change: a new occupant in me as the 13<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Peterborough. What a joy it was for me to cross the threshold of this splendid church today, to see you, and to be led to the cathedra by Archbishop O'Brien.

The first time I ever came to this Cathedral was three years ago, for the installation of Bishop Bill McGrattan. I am sincerely grateful to Bishop McGrattan for his shepherding of the diocese as I am for his shepherding of me, in these weeks of transition. Don't change your email or phone number Bishop; I may still have a couple of questions!

The liturgical books speak about a bishop taking possession of the diocese. But this liturgy is referred to simply as the reception of the Bishop in his Cathedral Church. I rather prefer that language. "Taking possession" has a vaguely military ring to it, and I am not an invader or a conqueror. I am simply a pastor, and it is the joy of a pastor to be received by the people of God. Thank you for coming out in such numbers today, family and friends, clergy and faithful of the diocese, consecrated men and women, civic and religious leaders and brother bishops. You have come today to receive me as the new bishop of Peterborough. The presence of so many of you brings me both joy and hope.

By a particular grace of God, I have the privilege to celebrate this Mass in the octave of Easter, and to preach on one of the great post-resurrection appearances in the Gospels. We have listened to the story of the Disciples on the Road to Emmaus, a much loved passage of Luke's Gospel. A famous Bible scholar calls it one of the immortal short stories of the world. I have often preached on this passage and its Eucharistic aspects, as I know many priests have. Today let me take a slightly different angle, which is the threefold office of a bishop; because I think this Gospel has something to say about that.

The Second Vatican Council clearly articulated that ordination to the episcopate obliges every bishop to three missions: the mission of teaching, the mission of sanctifying and the mission of governing or leading. These three missions reflect the Church's understanding of Jesus Christ as priest, prophet and king. Bishops are to continue the work of Christ the eternal pastor, and so all three missions are entrusted to them.

Where does Emmaus fit into all of that? First of all, governing or leading. In some ways, you could compare Emmaus to a classic road movie, a story about a journey. When Jesus joins those two disheartened disciples, he effectively leads them along the road. In his own gentle way he guides them; and by the way, gives them a much needed course correction – a reversal in fact. He does all of this by accompanying them; by walking along with them and listening to them. The first thing he does is get to know them. And notice how subtly he acts. He doesn't impose on them but makes as if to keep travelling on. They invite him to table with them.

Surely there is a model here for a bishop and for anyone in ministry. A bishop governs and leads, not as a CEO, but as a pastor. Authority is given to him but it is an authority for service, to build up the Church. The first requirement of a pastor is that he be with his people and know them. So, I hope not to be too tethered to a desk and office. Rather my goal is to get out on the road, because that's where you meet people. I look forward to visiting neighbourhoods, towns and villages, parishes and schools. I want to meet you and hear from you – about your joys and sorrows, your concerns and hopes, and what your faith means to you. I look forward to learning from you and being supported in prayer by you, as I will always pray for you. We are in this together as members of Christ's body the Church. Here I recall the encouraging words of St. Augustine: "for you I am a bishop; with you, after all, I am a Christian."

I trust that people will understand that, in the early going, my first priority will be to meet my brother priests. Because you, Fathers, are my closest collaborators: together we give pastoral leadership within this diocese. In *Pastores Gregis*, St. John Paul II wrote, "The Bishop will always strive to relate to his priests as a father and a brother who loves them, listens to them, welcomes them and seeks their cooperation." So I want to be both brother and father to you. And I'm convinced that to be a spiritual father, you have to first be a brother. If I may gloss on St. Augustine a little, for you I am a bishop, but with you I am a priest. The prospect of coming to know you as my colleagues and friends, united in the Lord's service, gives me great joy.

The second movement along the Emmaus road – Jesus taught them. After listening to the two disciples and hearing their concerns, he opened the Scriptures to them. It would be fair to say that he connected the dots for them, and helped them to see things in a new way, by explaining the biblical passages that were about himself. He must have been inspiring, because it says that their hearts burned within them as he spoke and taught. Yet it wasn't just a feel-good homily, because he didn't hesitate to correct them, even to the point of chastising: "how foolish you are and how slow to believe." Maybe we wouldn't regard that as the best opening line for a homily, but it obviously grabbed their attention.

The Second Vatican Council strongly emphasized the teaching role of the bishop, saying that, among a bishop's duties, preaching the Gospel has pride of place. The council said much the same about the ministry of the priest. So priests join with the bishop in carrying out this sacred task of teaching and preaching. In "The Joy of the Gospel," Pope Francis quipped that people in the Church suffer much because of homilies: the clergy from having to preach them and the laity from having to listen to them! More and more, the Church's ministers must teach and preach in ways that are both inspiring and challenging: in ways that captivate and intrigue people, and also call to conversion and holiness. Pope Francis, in a more serious comment, has said that we need to be able to speak words which set hearts on fire. And he reminds us that, in the homily, truth goes hand in hand with beauty and goodness.

That kind of compelling teaching and preaching is needed more than ever in the Church; for we face a missionary task in our society, where faith is often pushed to the margins and many seem to have forgotten the Judeo-Christian heritage which is our very foundation.

The third movement on the Road to Emmaus is the Eucharistic one: the eyes of the two disciples were opened when Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it and then shared it with them. The fact that Luke echoes here the language of the Last Supper makes the Eucharistic meaning very clear. It's noteworthy that as soon as they recognized Jesus, he vanished from their sight. From now on, they would enjoy his presence in a different and deeper way. In "Stay with Us,

Lord,” St John Paul II wrote about this: “When the disciples on the Road to Emmaus asked Jesus to stay with them, he responded by giving them a much greater gift; through the Sacrament of the Eucharist, he found a way to stay in them.” The Eucharist always brings us into a deep communion with the Lord Jesus.

This reflects on the sanctifying mission of the bishop. For it is the Bishop’s role to lead the community toward thankful and loving worship of God. As chief priest of the Diocese, his task is to gather the people in prayer, to lead them to an encounter with God in Christ. This he does primarily in the celebration of the Eucharist. I will have the privilege to celebrate Mass across this great Diocese, and with particular solemnity here in this Cathedral. From here, I will have the task to preside over the liturgical life of the Diocese. That must always be top of agenda for a bishop, because the Eucharist is the source and summit of our faith. You could also say that the Sunday Mass is where the rubber hits the road for our Catholic people: because that is where we encounter Jesus. It is where we recognize him in the breaking of bread, where we enter into communion with him, and where he nourishes us in our faith.

Well, lest you suffer too much from this homily dear friends, let me assure you that I rarely preach this long! And while I have some sense of the occasion, I also recognize that – for better or worse – you will have years to listen to me. So let me try to bring this to a conclusion with one last thought. With all these reflections on the Road to Emmaus, we never want to forget about the Road *from* Emmaus. For after meeting him on the way and recognizing him at the table, the two disciples were moved – and they began to move! They made the seven mile trek back to Jerusalem: hearts on fire to share the Good News with their companions, that Jesus had risen from the dead.

There is a takeaway in that Epilogue, not just for bishops or priests but for all of us. Our encounter with the Risen Lord impels us to share the Good News with others. For a Church that is striving to move from maintenance to mission, that is an indispensable part of the story. Having encountered the Lord Jesus, after being nourished by Word and Sacrament, we are then sent forth on a Mission: sent to give the witness of our faith, our words and our lives. As one of the dismissals from Mass so clearly instructs, “Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.”

This is an enormous mission these days, but it has always been the Church’s mission. We go forth from the table to encounter others along the road, to share the Good News that Jesus is Lord and that he is truly risen: to make real and effective the Joy of the Gospel in our world - to live our faith through love. No one of us fulfills that task perfectly, and I, like the rest of you, will fall short from time to time. Still, as Bishop, I commit myself to walking that road from Emmaus along with you, so that together, we might carry out joyfully and faithfully the sacred mission that is ours.