

Richard



Bishop of Arundel & Brighton

PASTORAL LETTER
for the Twenty-Fifth Sunday of the Year
Evangelii Gaudium Sunday
21st September 2025

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today we celebrate *Evangelii Gaudium* Sunday, a day on which we reflect on the joy of the Gospel message and the call that is given to each one of us to bring that message to those around us.

Pope Francis, in the Apostolic Exhortation that gives this Sunday its name, reminded us that “Being Church means... proclaiming and bringing God’s salvation to our world, which often goes astray and needs to be encouraged, given hope and strengthened on the way.”¹

This theme of hope and strength on the way points to this present Jubilee Year, with its call to us all to reflect on our lives as Pilgrims of Hope. The virtue of Hope is one of the marks of the Christian. It is a gift to us, calling us to live our whole lives in the light of the Kingdom to which we are called and to which we journey.

Our Baptism marks the beginning of this journey in a particular way and brings with it the vocation that is the call to holiness, a necessary part of which is the responsibility and the privilege of proclaiming the Gospel to the world. For most of us, this will mean a witness in our family settings, at school and college, in our places of work and, for much of the time, in our locality. The Good News of Salvation is always transformative. As Pope Francis said, “Whenever a community receives the message of salvation, the Holy Spirit enriches its culture with the transforming power of the Gospel.”²

As members of the Church, we carry this message to our brothers and sisters. Where there is injustice, as in the days of Amos the prophet from whom we hear in this Sunday’s first reading, the world cries out for an answer. As witnesses to Christ, we are called to respond to these cries, witnessing to Hope and being the Lord’s instruments in raising those who are cast down. As Jesus proclaims in this Sunday’s Gospel, we have only one master and we must place the mission He has given us before all else.

¹ POPE FRANCIS, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium on the proclamation of the Gospel in today’s world*, n.114.

² Ibid. n.116.

St. Paul, in his letter to Timothy, urges us all to pray. We carry out our mission strengthened and nourished by prayer and the celebration of the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist, as members of our parish communities. Pope Francis, in the Encyclical Letter *Dilexit nos*, wrote: "Mission is experienced in fellowship with our communities and with the whole Church."³

This mission is the motivation and heart of our Diocesan Pastoral Plan and in this 60th Anniversary Year of the Diocese, we are seeing the fruit of the work of recent years as the first of our new parishes comes into being. This began, last weekend, in Brighton & Hove and the other parishes will follow in the time ahead. The journey has seen a good deal of conversation and renewed collaboration taking place across the Diocese, rooted in prayer. These conversations, leading to the development of leadership teams for our new-formed parishes, are bearing fruit. The formation taking place in our communities, together with the increasing working together in our new parishes will pave the way for ever more effective mission across the Diocese.

Of course, we have a distance yet to travel; there is much to be done and this will always be so. However, there is no need for us to fear, for all is gift. "Jesus is at your side at every step of the way" Pope Francis reminded us, "He will not cast you into the abyss or leave you to your own devices. He will always be there to encourage and accompany you. He has promised and he will do it: 'For I am with you always, to the end of the age'."⁴

As we continue our pilgrim journey of Hope, mindful of the many blessings of the first sixty years of our Diocese, may we be strengthened in the mission we have received from the Lord. Let us place nothing before this task and measure all our activity by it. Speaking on the Vigil of Pentecost earlier this year, Pope Leo said: "Evangelisation, dear brothers and sisters, is not our attempt to conquer the world but the infinite grace that radiates from lives transformed by the Kingdom of God."⁵ May our lives, then, be transformed. May we become communities of saints, ever-more effective in proclaiming to the world the Joy of the Gospel.

With every Blessing,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "+Richard". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

³ POPE FRANCIS, *Encyclical Letter Dilexit nos* on the Human and Divine Love of the Heart of Jesus Christ, n.212.

⁴ Ibid. n.215.

⁵ POPE LEO, *Homily on the Vigil of Pentecost*.