



Diocese of Westminster

Bishop John Sherrington's words of thanks and praise at the conclusion of his Mass of Ordination at Westminster Cathedral - 14 September 2011

After the wonderful and very moving liturgy we have just celebrated, my only words can be those of thanks and praise. Thanks and praise to all those many people who have worked so hard to ensure the fitting and joyous celebration; thanks and praise to God whose grace has led me to this day. As St Paul says: "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace towards me has not been in vain" (1 Cor 15: 10). I would like to thank all those people whose faith has nurtured my own, my parents Frank and Catherine who sadly died some years ago, steadfast grandparents, family, priests, teachers, friends and many others. For those who have died, I pray that they may see God face-to-face and share in the resurrection on the last day.

I would like to thank HE Archbishop Antonio Mennini, the Apostolic Nuncio and representative of Pope Benedict XVI for being here today, HE Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, Archbishop Vincent Nichols and many other bishops and priests who are here today. I would like to thank the ecumenical guests today... In particular I thank Bishop Malcolm McMahon and the priests and people of Nottingham Diocese who have flocked to London in great numbers. It is good to see young people from the schools of Good Shepherd, Christ the King and Trinity School Nottingham as well as from St Benedict's School, Derby and representatives from schools in the Archdiocese. The messages of congratulations from so many people have been overwhelming and deeply affirming. I would like to acknowledge the generosity of Bishop Malcolm and the diocese in presenting me with the crozier and to thank them from my heart. Friends have travelled from Australia and the United States, friends and colleagues from All Hallows College in Dublin and many others. My initial formation must acknowledge the work of the Vincentian Order and all those whose dedicated ministry has formed priests for many decades. I believe that when the late Bishop James McGuinness sent me to All Hallows, it was providential though I didn't understand it at the time. I wish Fr Kevin Rafferty CM, the Rector of All Hallows College, had been here today and was inspired by his vision and energy for the Church and its mission in the light of *Lumen gentium* and *Gaudium et spes*.

Whilst as a Church we face many challenges today, I believe that it is also an exciting time to become a bishop. In the light of the Pope's visit last year and the deep searching within many people for spiritual values and for a better life in the community, the hope of the gospel of Jesus Christ can fall on fertile soil if we are courageous to proclaim it. We are called to encourage one another in deepening our Christian faith together and sharing it with others. Archbishop Vincent has asked me to live and exercise my Episcopal ministry firstly in Hertfordshire and so I look forward to meeting the clergy and the people in the parishes and schools of this county. I have also been asked to have oversight of Education and Formation and look forward to becoming Chairman of the Diocesan Education Commission: a responsibility with many challenges today but a wonderful opportunity to meet and support the dedicated teachers and staff in our schools, governors throughout the Diocese of Westminster who serve in a generous and dedicated way for the good of their schools, and experience the giftedness of our young people who have so much energy and life to give to the Church. As Pope Benedict told us last year at Strawberry Hill; our schools must help our children to develop their gifts to the full, help them to see how deeply God

loves them to support their developing friendship with God in order to become saints who live well in the service of others.

My hope is that I can encourage and support you in faith so that we can share our hope in Jesus Christ with others around us. Thank again for your expressions of love and many prayers.