

Pastoral Letter To Be Read at Masses on 3/4 September 2011

“AND WITH YOUR SPIRIT”

This coming week marks three important events in the life of the Catholic Church on these islands.

This Sunday, 4 September, we shall be using the new translation of the most common parts of the Mass for the first time. Prayer cards and leaflets will be supplied to help you with your responses. Then, on the First Sunday of Advent (27 November) the new translation of the prayers for the Collect, Offertory and Postcommunion will be added. These, together with some new translations of the Preface and parts of the Eucharistic Prayer will complete the New Translation of the Roman Missal.

Although there will be some awkwardness as we adjust to these new texts, there is no doubt that they put us in close touch with the scriptural roots of the prayers at Mass. These translations give us a new opportunity to deepen our appreciation, understanding and love of the Mass. The Mass means quite simply everything Christ is for us, everything he does for us and everything we are called to be. If we use these texts prayerfully and thankfully, they will yield up treasures both new and old.

On Friday 16 September, the obligation of Friday Penance is re-established. In reality, it was never really removed since Catholics were invited to choose some form of Penance to mark the day of the Lord's death and express sorrow for our sins. In re-introducing meatless Fridays, or some other suitable Penance, the Bishops of Wales and England "...wish to make Friday Penance....a clear and distinctive mark of Catholic identity. They recognise that the best habits are those which are acquired as part of a common resolve and common witness.....Many may wish to go beyond this simple act of common witness with a time of prayer and further self sacrifice. In this way, we unite our sacrifice with that of the sacrifice of Christ who gave up his very life for our salvation".

Sunday 18 September marks the first anniversary of the extraordinary visit of Pope Benedict XVI for the canonisation of Blessed John Henry Newman. Who can forget the impact of his words and gestures during that visit? The thirty five young people from Cardiff and Hereford who attended the recent World Youth Day in Madrid will testify to the extraordinary charisma of the Holy Father.

There will be a Mass at Westminster Cathedral at 3.00pm on Sunday 18 September to mark the anniversary. I shall say a special prayer for the people of Cardiff at the mosaic of St. David blessed by the Pope Benedict when he celebrated Mass there last year. We shall have our own Mass of Thanksgiving at 5.30pm the evening before (Saturday 17 September) at St. David's Cathedral). It would be good to welcome as many priests and people from the Diocese who are able to attend.

With every blessing
+George Stack
Archbishop of Cardiff