

HOMILY FOR LORD MAYOR OF CARDIFF
CIVIC SERVICE – ST.DAVID’S CATHEDRAL
6th NOVEMBER 2016
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When you visit the City Hall in Cardiff and its Council Chamber, you are immediately surrounded by the signs and symbols of this great city and the roles and responsibilities of the Lord Mayor and Councillors in service of its citizens. In this Cathedral this morning we are also surrounded by signs and symbols, statues and pictures, candles and incense, music and silence. All of these remind us of the transcendent dimensions of life and of our faith in God – or more importantly God’s faith in us.

The Lord Mayor comes among us as the First Citizen of the city wearing her robes of office and preceded by the mace, the symbol of office. The Archbishop, too, is dressed in a formal way, wearing vestments for Mass and carrying a shepherd’s staff, a sign of his responsibility of teaching and caring for the flock. All of these external signs and rituals are reminders to us who use them that the responsibilities we have are far greater than the resources of capacity of a single person. We are carried by our history and tradition, supported by all those who work in Council or Church for the common good of the people.

The motto of the City of Cardiff is “Deffro Mae’n Ddydd - Awake, it is the day”. Not a million miles from St Paul who wrote: “*Awake O Sleeper arise from the dead and Christ will give you life*” (Eph 5:14). The Latin version would be “Carpe Diem - Seize the day” Grasp the opportunity. In theology we talk about “The Grace of the present moment”. “Today is the tomorrow you were worried about yesterday”. And there are many things to worry about, nationally and internationally. The threat of terrorism. The violence in so many cities. The apparent nihilism of the drink and drug culture which cuts right across society at every level. Pope Francis calls it “The Culture of Death”. How good it is for the Diocese of Cardiff to be working with Citizens UK and with the city and government in trying to provide accommodation and a new life for refugees who are coming to this country.

The Lord Mayor, the Councillors and the officers have to deal with all these social issues. But uniquely in this year of office our Lord Mayor will be given privileged access into the organisations and institutions which work for the Common Good in this city. She will already know through the engagements she performs, of the vast wealth of goodwill and dedication, which lies, often hidden, which is at the heart of our communities. In this complex society, we need to invest our high ideals and practical service in one person that she may represent and personify all that is good in our city and in our communities. Her office can bring healing and reconciliation in communities and by her presence with the most humble of groups.

The Catholic bishops of England and Wales once wrote a document called “The Common Good”. They said “*The loss of confidence*

among dispossessed people in our midst causes them to turn increasingly from the public arena to their own private world. There is a retreat from the public level of community involvement and response, to the merely domestic and individual sphere". The role of our Lord Mayor and Councillors is an antidote to that "privatisation" and provides both a challenge and opportunity for all citizens to take ownership and responsibility for our different communities.

Many of you will have seen the devastation and death in Italy with the recent earthquakes. My bed shook in Rome last Sunday. The ancient village of Norcia where St. Benedict was born in the 5th century was destroyed. The Benedictine Abbey in Herefordshire was partly responsible for the foundation of the Archdiocese of Cardiff one hundred years ago. Writing his rule for monks, Benedict said: *"Let the Abbot so temper things that the strong may have something to strive after, and the weak may not be crushed"*. The point is that none of us is completely strong and there is weakness in each one of us. What a privilege it is for those who lead us and serve us in public office to celebrate the strength and sustain the weak for the good of all. Benedict's rule reflects the words of St. Ireneaus in the 2nd century. *"The glory of God is humanity fully alive"*. But we can't afford to miss any opportunity. "Seize the Day – Deffro Mae'n Ddydd".