



FRESH WIND IN OUR SAILS

One year ago we celebrated the historic visit of Pope Benedict XVI to our shores. We can all probably bring to mind at least one favourite moment, whether we attended an event, watched it on the television or on the internet. We know that the visit blessed us as a Catholic community, and we know that it blessed the Holy Father too; when he returned to Rome he is reported to have said that it had given him fresh wind in his sails. The phrase, ‘fresh wind in our sails’, is the chosen theme for Home Mission Sunday which the Bishops of England and Wales invite the Catholic community to celebrate today.

To say that we have ‘fresh wind in our sails’ means that we, led by the example of the Holy Father, are trying to respond to the call to holiness, that we are seeking to grow in openness to the Holy Spirit who wants to sustain us throughout our lives, in all their struggles and joys. It means that we are praying for and seeking new ways of sharing the joy of our faith every day. In the Holy Father’s *Address to Pupils* on 17 September last year, he said: ‘I hope that among those of you listening to me today there are some of the future saints of the twenty-first century. What God wants most of all for each one of you is that you should become holy. He loves you much more than you could ever begin to imagine, and he wants the very best for you. And by far the best thing for you is to grow in holiness.’ Pope Benedict XVI went on to say: ‘...true happiness is to be found in God. We need to have the courage to place our deepest hopes in God alone, not in money, in a career, in worldly success, or in our relationships with others, but in God. Only he can satisfy the deepest needs of our hearts.’

Today’s readings encourage us to choose God afresh in our lives, to seek to follow His ways. This ongoing choice for God over ourselves is our response to the call to holiness that the Pope placed before us last year, that the Church has placed before us for the last two thousand years, that Jesus placed before us during his earthly ministry, and that He continues to place

before us, as His Spirit speaks to our hearts and through the Church today.

As we grow in holiness we are allowing the Holy Spirit to teach us how to fulfil the Great Commandment of Jesus, to love the Lord our God, and our neighbour as ourselves. We love God and our neighbour in many ways, central to which is committing to spend time in prayer each day and to meeting with others in their needs. These needs present themselves in different ways - physical, emotional and spiritual, among others. In giving witness to the love of God, we are invited to support those in need practically, to pray for them and to share our faith with them so that fresh wind might be brought to their sails too.

On Home Mission Sunday, let's remember in prayer our Bishops as they prepare to gather today to give thanks for the Papal Visit. Secondly, let's also reflect on what Jesus is calling us to do in our time in service of mission and pray for all those involved in evangelisation in England and Wales. May we be people of holiness. May we be faithful witnesses to Jesus, in our families, in our workplaces and with our friends.