

## **Homily: Rt Rev Peter Doyle, Bishop of Northampton Diocese**

*Joshua Camp on Friday 3 August 2012*

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When driving down here to Forest Gate in East London earlier today I was listening to a radio program that was discussing parents crying at their children's success and the success of athletes themselves.

As I came closer to this venue I began to have tears in my own eyes. I had not been in this area for 50 years. When I was a young man, I caught the 25 bus to Woodgrange Park railway station, not so as to come to St Bonaventure's school but to catch the train to St Ignatius, a Jesuit school, so it was amazing to see how different the place is now - and realising how different I am too.

It is a real privilege to be here with all of you. You have responded to the invitation to be a Christian presence and witness for the Olympics. It is very apt therefore that the theme of our readings today from Jeremiah (26:1-9) and from the Gospel of Matthew (13:54-58) were on the theme of 'the Prophet'.

So what is a prophet? It is not someone who foretells the future. The prophet speaks God's word that enlivens us and helps us to flourish. Of course, to be a prophet involves rejection and opposition. We see that in the life of the prophet Jeremiah, heard in the first reading. He is always complaining to God about being asked to be a prophet, and of course The Prophet, Jesus, experienced opposition and misunderstanding in his home town, and they rejected him. But that is not surprising because God's Word is a word of truth. God's word is a word of justice. God's word is a word of beauty. And the true prophet offers a word that is true and effective and brings about God's will.

As Pope Benedict said, you have to speak with courage and humility, and the source of the Spirit of the prophet is of course our Lord himself. He is the source of hope for our lives. All of us are called to be prophets. It is part of our vocation as baptised members of the Church and something to remember as we renew our baptismal promises today.

While there were a few tears in my eyes as I came here, I was also reflecting and thanking God and praising him because I looked back to when I was 17 yrs old. Here I am today an old man of 68 as a bishop and I wondered what had held me together. Obviously there is the love of my family. But what has run through my life has been the Word of the God, the Eucharist, the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the other sacraments that I have received, and I became very conscious of how much I have taken for granted for 68 years. I think the Spirit of God touched me to give thanks to the Father at this Mass, and I hope that the same Spirit touches each of you, whatever age you are, whatever situation you are in at this moment.

Do not feel anxious. May God give each one of you strength to run the race of faith, with the torch of faith in your hand, and above all enjoy London 2012!