



CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

Homily: Cardinal Hume Centre Mass

Archbishop Bernard Longley, Birmingham

HOMILY, 18 JUNE 2014

Hope does not deceive us.

Today we are celebrating a Mass of thanksgiving in recognition of dedication and service. At the beginning of this Mass I welcomed the benefactors and friends of the Cardinal Hume Centre together with its Staff and Trustees, some representatives of its many volunteers and of all those who use the Centre's services. I am experiencing a sense of home-coming, too, as I return for the first time in nearly five years to a place that became very dear to me during my seven years as an Auxiliary Bishop in Westminster.

This year's celebration has a special poignancy as we remember the fifteenth anniversary of the death of Cardinal Basil Hume. It is a particular pleasure to be celebrating this Mass with members of the Cardinal's family together with others who had the privilege of knowing him personally. I recall that when I came to work for the Bishops' Conference in 1996 Cardinal Hume welcomed me and then asked me about my work – when I said it was in support of Christian unity he replied: “ah, you are the new Fr Ecumenism!”

I mention this because I can remember the warmth of his welcome and the significance of being recognised and valued for being part of the team. Amongst the many remarkable personal gifts that Cardinal Hume possessed was the singular gift of being able to awaken a sense of worth and belonging in those whom he met. It is a profoundly apostolic gift since it reflects a characteristic of the Lord himself, in his readiness to give time and consideration to people. Jesus knew how to awaken in others a sense of worth and of closeness to himself, reflecting the love of God his heavenly Father for every person.

Linked to this gift in the late Cardinal was the instinct he possessed to notice what was happening around him in such a way that he came to understand and appreciate his environment. He saw those whom others overlooked and he saw beyond the surface, sometimes in an alarmingly perceptive way. The Cardinal Hume Centre owes something of its existence to the Cardinal's ability to see what was happening around his own home and Cathedral here in the City of Westminster.

I imagine that to have been one of his characteristics for a long time before he became Archbishop and the motto he chose also points to that quality. Pax inter spinas – peace among the thorns calls to mind the reading of St Paul's Letter to the Romans: our sufferings bring perseverance, and our perseverance brings character, and character brings hope. When people who have needs are noticed and their circumstances are understood by someone who can make a difference, then their difficulties and sufferings become a cause for hope.

Like faith and love, hope is a virtue and it is a gift. As Christians we are often privileged to find ourselves in circumstances where we can be instruments of hope for others, tools used by the Lord himself to help shape and fashion a better future for others. Hope offers a future to those who no longer dared to imagine what the future might bring – it is a life-giving gift and it is the privilege of the Cardinal Hume Centre to be a channel of hope.

Times and needs may have changed since the Centre first opened its doors but the desire to respond to the Gospel has always found an authentic expression in what happens here. Under the guidance of the Trustees and through the planning and generous imagination of the Director and Staff working closely with the Centre's clients, you have adapted your outreach accordingly in response to those needs and in responding to the call of Christ.

At this moment we might like to recall the ways in which the work of the Centre has been developing over recent years in response to the need of young homeless people, of families and children and especially where material or spiritual poverty continue to cast a shadow. Your work is not simply motivated by a desire to plug the gaps in statutory provision. You seek to offer something that is qualitatively different because it is based on the values of the Gospel and because it is in response to the appeal of Christ himself.

The *raison d'être* of the Cardinal Hume Centre is the impact on us as Christians of the example and teaching of Christ. Jesus' life, death and resurrection have by grace changed the quality of human life – they offer the realistic prospect of eternal life in the Father's Kingdom and a real experience of that life here and now. It is this vision of faith that continues to inspire and guide the work of the Cardinal Hume Centre today in its varied forms of service and of outreach.

As we recall the memory of Cardinal Hume at his anniversary we thank our Lord that his insight into human need, and especially the need at his own doorstep, has enabled so many young people and families to embrace a new hope and to catch a glimpse of the peace and joy of God's Kingdom through the loving and dedicated work of the Centre that is proud to bear his name.

Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. May he rest in peace...Amen

With every Blessing

+Bernard Longley

Archbishop of Birmingham