



# CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

ENGLAND & WALES

## Episcopal Ordination of Fr Robert Byrne C.O. *Apostolic Nuncio: Archbishop Antonio Mennini*

METROPOLITAN CATHEDRAL OF ST CHAD, BIRMINGHAM, 13 MAY 2014

**I am very pleased to be here, representing the Holy Father, Pope Francis, at the Episcopal ordination of your new Auxiliary Bishop. My first words must be of congratulation to you, dear Bishop Robert, as you begin your Episcopal ministry here in Birmingham, working in collaboration, in a new way, with Archbishop Bernard. I bring you the thanks and prayers of our Holy Father, Pope Francis, and my own prayers and support too.**

Dear Bishop Robert, you are probably feeling a little daunted at the moment but I have no doubt that you know in your heart that you can trust in the power of Almighty God who has called you, who loves you and is closer to you than you realise. It is our Lord who commands that we share with him in carrying his Cross, but he also gives us the graces and gifts to bear it! Also, though you will probably miss the community life of the Oratorians, the Sons of Saint Philip Neri, among whose number you were formed, nonetheless you will not be too far from your community and, having ministered in this diocese for many years, you will, I am sure, feel very much at home here and will continue to enjoy the support of your friends and confreres as you continue to answer the Lord's call to you.

Speaking to newly appointed Bishops on 19 September last year, the Holy Father Pope Francis said: "May your heart be large enough to welcome all the men and women you come across during the day and whom you go and seek out when you go about your parishes and to every community. Ask yourselves from this moment: how will those who knock at my door find it? If they find it open, through your kindness, your availability, they will experience God's fatherhood and will understand that the Church is a good mother who always welcomes and loves..." Pope Francis went on to affirm: "The Bishop journeys with and among his flock. This means setting out with one's faithful and with all those who turn to you, sharing in their joys and hopes, their difficulties and sufferings, as brothers and as friends, but especially as fathers who can listen, understand, help and guide. Walking together demands love and ours is a service of love, amoris officium, as Saint Augustine used to say (*In evangelium Johannis tractatus 123, 5: PL 35, 1967*).

Before concluding, I should also like to quote just a few words of the Holy Father-Emeritus, Benedict XVI. Speaking at an Episcopal Ordination just before his Apostolic Visit to Great Britain in September 2010, he reminded the new bishops that: "The... Lord requires fidelity of his servant. He has been entrusted with a great good that does not belong to him. The Church is not our Church but his Church, the Church of God. The servant must account for how he has managed the good that has been entrusted to him. We do not bind people to us; we do not seek power, prestige or esteem for ourselves... The fidelity of the servant of Jesus Christ also consists precisely in the fact that he does not attempt to adapt faith to the fashions of the times. Christ alone has the words of eternal life and we must bring these words to the people." (*Homily, 13.9.10*)

Dear Bishop Robert, working always with Archbishop Bernard, strive always to bring the Catholic Faith to God's Holy people. Work always to strengthen fraternal communion, especially among and with the priests. Pray for all the people of this diocese of Birmingham, trusting too in their prayers and in their love for you, and treasure the support that those prayers will bring you.

I thank you for your kind attention.

**Archbishop Antonio Mennini**  
*Apostolic Nuncio to Great Britain*