



CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

ENGLAND & WALES

Episcopal Ordination of Fr Robert Byrne C.O. *Words of Welcome: Archbishop Bernard Longley*

METROPOLITAN CATHEDRAL OF ST CHAD, BIRMINGHAM, 13 MAY 2014

I am delighted to welcome you to St Chad's Cathedral on this very joyful day in the life of the Archdiocese of Birmingham. An especially warm welcome to His Eminence, Cardinal Vincent, whom we had the great pleasure of greeting here in his old home only six weeks ago, shortly after his return from Rome as Cardinal. Thank you, Your Eminence, for agreeing to preach during this Mass of Ordination.

I welcome the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Mennini, as representative of the Holy Father among us – and I thank him and the staff of the Nunciature for all that they have done in helping to provide us with a new Auxiliary Bishop.

Fr Robert's parents, his uncle Fr John Rigby, his brother Philip and other members of his family are happily with us today and I thank them for their consistent support of his priestly ministry over the years and in his vocation as an Oratorian. May I also congratulate Fr John on his Diamond Jubilee of Ordination this year.

I welcome our civic representatives and especially the Mayor and Mayoress of Solihull, Councillor and Mrs Tildesley.

Fr Robert first came to our Archdioceses as a member of the Birmingham Oratory before becoming a founder member of the Oxford Oratory twenty-four years ago. Today I welcome the Apostolic Visitor of the Oratory, Fr Felix Selden, alongside the Procurator General, Fr Mario Aviles, the Provosts and Fathers from the English Oratories and worldwide.

In this Cathedral, so familiar to Blessed John Henry Newman, we shall pray today for the unity of the Church of Christ and I am grateful for the presence of all our ecumenical guests, the National Ecumenical Officers and the General Secretary of Churches Together in England who have worked alongside Fr Robert in recent years.

It is nearly five years since the Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Philip Pargeter. I wish to thank him today for the wisdom, good humour and untiring dedication with which he has continued to serve the priests and parish communities, especially in Birmingham and Worcestershire over the intervening years. Bishop Philip has been looking forward to this day and I thank him for acting as a Co-consecrator together with Fr Robert's old friend, Bishop Michael Barber, the Bishop of Oakland in the USA.

Fr Robert will soon be working alongside Bishop David and Bishop William. The memories of Blessed John Henry Newman and Blessed Dominic Barberi, the Passionist priest who received him into the Catholic Church, are woven into the story of our diocesan Church. Their influence will surely be enhanced by the service of an Oratorian bishop alongside a Passionist bishop in the years to come. We ask for their intercession today.

With these thoughts in mind I ask you to stand.