

**Pastoral Letter of the
Diocesan Administrator of the Diocese of Nottingham
appointed to be read at all Masses
on the Sixth Sunday of Easter
Saturday 24 / Sunday 25 May 2014**

Dear friends in Christ,

On Wednesday 16th April, many of us were present in Saint Barnabas' Cathedral to celebrate the Chrism Mass, during which we bade farewell to Bishop Malcolm before his installation as Archbishop of Liverpool on Thursday 1st May.

During his homily that morning, the Bishop reminded us that:

Through Baptism, Christians witness to the grace of God in their own everyday lives; they sanctify the world by their presence and their good works; and they lead others to the anointed One, the Christ.

While he was our Bishop, Bishop Malcolm did that, and we were richly blessed by his presence among us. I hope that we will all continue to pray for him. Please also pray for me, as I take up the task of Diocesan Administrator until the new Bishop is installed; for the College of Consultors, who will assist me in my task; and that our Holy Father Pope Francis will soon be able to send us a new Bishop of Nottingham, a good and holy priest to proclaim Christ and give us the Holy Spirit, as the Apostles did in today's First Reading.

But the task of witnessing to the grace of God which Bishop Malcolm spoke about in Holy Week is not just for the Bishop; because it flows from the Sacrament of Baptism, it is for all of us to bear witness to Jesus, to sanctify the world by our presence and to lead others to Christ.

Christ himself is our model in doing this: he tells us that to love him means keeping his commandments; we should try, by the grace of God, to be like him in all that we say and do.

This 'Safeguarding Sunday' gives us the opportunity to reflect upon how we treat the more vulnerable members of our society. The Gospels record that Jesus had a special place, a soft spot, for children and the vulnerable. We read stories of how he healed the sick and welcomed the outcast. We learn about how people brought children to him so that he could touch them: 'Let the little children come to me,' he said, 'and do not stop them, for it is to such of these that the kingdom of God belongs' (*Lk 18:16*).

Following the example of Jesus, the Church has always had a particular concern for the young and the vulnerable. The Catholic Church is one of the world's biggest providers of education, healthcare and social services, running schools and hospitals in some of the most deprived parts of the world. That is one reason why it is a scandal, for all of us, that some priests, religious and teachers have abused the trust which is placed in them; there is absolutely no excuse whatsoever for the evil of emotional, physical or sexual abuse and neglect, in whatever form it takes, whether in the Church, the school, the family or elsewhere, or for an attitude which somehow minimises or negates the effects of abuse. That is wrong, and it needs to be stamped out. Justice demands nothing less.

This is why the safeguarding of the welfare of our children and vulnerable adults is a duty incumbent on all of us, because we all have a role to play in opening the doors of the Church and doing our bit for the more vulnerable members of our parishes and the wider community. Although some people perceive safeguarding as being about form filling, it is more than this – it is about nurturing the weaker members of the community and helping them to belong. The Church recognises and upholds the dignity of every human person, and we must all continue to maintain a safe environment for all, responding sensitively and compassionately to the needs of others, especially the most vulnerable.

Today also gives me the opportunity to thank the members of our Safeguarding Commission and, even more importantly, all our parish safeguarding representatives throughout the Diocese, including in your parish, for their hard work on behalf of all of us. They have a particular role to play in helping to ensure that all who exercise ministry with children and vulnerable adults, such as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion and children's liturgy leaders, have appropriate training and support. It is thanks to their work that we can have peace of mind knowing that our children and vulnerable adults will be cared for and loved by people who will only seek their

good. Just as in our families we should nurture and care for one another, so we should in the family of God, the Church.

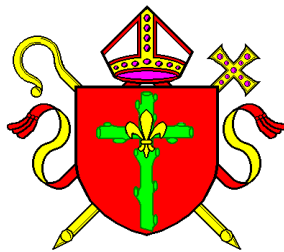
Jesus came so that we may have life, and live it to the full (cf. *Jn* 10:10). Much energy has been spent, and rightly so, in creating an atmosphere in our churches where all are welcome and in which all will be safe from harm. This is a work in progress, in our Diocese and in each and every parish. By having the welfare of others at the forefront of our minds, we will more effectively bear witness to Jesus, sanctify the world by our presence and lead others to Christ.

St Peter reminds us today that we are called to be people of hope, always ready to share our faith with others, treating them with courtesy and respect. I hope and pray that, in all that we say and do, we will share God's love, build up his Body and proclaim his Good News.

With my prayers and every good wish for you and your families,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. M. Govern". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Rev Mgr Canon Thomas McGovern Prot Ap
Diocesan Administrator of the Diocese of Nottingham



**Bishop's House
Nottingham**

May 2014