

# DIOCESE OF HEXHAM AND NEWCASTLE



***Rt Rev Séamus Cunningham  
Bishop-elect***



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **JOURNEY STARTS FOR NEW BISHOP'S ORDINATION**

Preparations for the Ordination and Installation of the 13<sup>th</sup> Catholic Bishop of Hexham & Newcastle Diocese entered their final week today.

The Rt Rev Seamus Cunningham, Bishop-designate and present Administrator of the Diocese, which covers the North East from Berwick-upon-Tweed to Stockton-on-Tees, will be installed as Bishop in a two-hour service and ceremony at St Mary's Roman Catholic Cathedral, Newcastle upon Tyne on Friday, 20 March 2009 at 12 Noon.

That is the feast day of St Cuthbert of Lindisfarne, 7th Century Northern Saint and patron of the diocese.

People from every town and rural community in the region will join the most senior Catholic clergy in England, Wales and Scotland, more than 20 regional and civic guests, 200 priests, deacons and members of religious orders, 19 representatives of North East Christian Churches and Other Faiths – plus 105 of Canon Cunningham's close family from Ireland to pack the Cathedral to its great West Door on Clayton Street West.

Canon Cunningham, 66, will be ordained Bishop by Liverpool's Archbishop the Most Rev Patrick Kelly and will be supported by the Rt Rev Ambrose Griffiths – the 11<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Hexham & Newcastle until his retirement in 2004 – and Bishop Michael Campbell from Lancaster. Both will concelebrate the Ordination Mass with Archbishop Kelly.

Present on the sanctuary of the Cathedral will be Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor of Westminster, Cardinal Keith O'Brien, of St Andrews and Edinburgh, and the Pope's personal representative Archbishop Faustino Sainz Muñoz, who will bring with him the official Proclamation from Rome, written in Latin.

They will be accompanied by Fra Matthew Festing, from Northumberland, the Grand Knight of Malta who has equal rank to a Cardinal, two other Archbishops, 25 other Bishops from England & Wales and Abbot Cuthbert Madden of Ampleforth.

Regional representatives include the three Lord Lieutenancies of Tyne & Wear, Durham and Northumberland, the Lord Mayor of Newcastle, the Mayors of Gateshead, North Tyneside, South Tyneside and Stockton, Deputy Mayors of Sunderland and Durham Cities and Chairmen of Hartlepool and Northumberland Councils.

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Ecumenical guests include the Bishop of Durham the Rt Rev Tom Wright, the Bishop of Newcastle the Rt Rev Martin Wharton, Bishop Mark Bryant of Jarrow, other Anglicans and regional representatives of Methodist, Baptist, United Reformed and Free Churches and the Salvation Army. A special group of eight clergy are from Newcastle city centre churches and Cullercoats and North Shields, in the Canon's former parish.

Representatives of other Faiths include three members of the Jewish community in Newcastle, and representatives of the Zoroastrian order and Hindu community.

Fifty members of Hexham & Newcastle Diocesan choir have been rehearsing under the direction of Philip Robinson. With organist David Alison, they will lead the music and singing throughout the Ordination and Mass.

Friday's Ordination will be followed in the evening by a service of Solemn Vespers in St Mary's Cathedral (7pm) so by the end of the day some 1,300 guests are expected to have taken part in the celebrations.

It is because of the large numbers that both services will be strictly ticket-only events by invitation.

**Date of release: Friday, 13 March 2009**

**# For further information, in the first instance, please contact Bishop's House on Newcastle 0191-228 0003 and speak to Paula Henley, PA to H&N Bishop-designate or email: [office@rcdhn.org.uk](mailto:office@rcdhn.org.uk)**

**# A short profile on Bishop-designate Seamus Cunningham is available on request or from H&N Diocesan website [www.rcdhn.org.uk](http://www.rcdhn.org.uk)**

**# Photos of the Bishop-designate are available through the Diocesan website [www.rcdhn.org.uk](http://www.rcdhn.org.uk)**