



Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

Homily preached by the Most Reverend Patrick Kelly, Archbishop of Liverpool, at the Episcopal Ordination of the Right Reverend Seamus Cunningham as Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle. 12.00 noon on Friday 20 March 2008, the Feast of St Cuthbert of Lindisfarne, in the Cathedral Church of St Mary, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Thanks be to God that the Lord at whose command we gather today is the one who 'when he saw the crowds felt sorry for them because they were harassed and dejected like sheep without a shepherd'. Two words: Northern Rock: can stand for the tens of thousands at this time who are harassed and dejected.

Thanks be to God that this day is about a willingness to allow hearts and minds to be judged, healed, renewed, transformed by this promise fulfilled among us. 'The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for the Lord has anointed me...He has sent me to bind up hearts that are broken, to comfort all who mourn, to give them for despondency, praise.'

But this Spirit is from the wounded side of the only Son sent not to condemn the world but sent because God so loves the world.

So the greatness of heart that we plead for this day is such that every word shall be Good News, Gospel, flowing from someone who will place his whole being under the shadow of the book of the Gospels, as he welcomes not a spirit of timidity but a spirit of love and power and self control. Every prayer, word, decision shall further God's kingdom of justice, love and peace and shall be a curing of all kinds of diseases, sickness.

Seamus,

I am utterly convinced that the Father does give us the power through the Spirit for our hidden self to grow strong, so that Christ will live in our hearts through faith. As a Bishop, who two weeks today will give thanks for 25 years as a Bishop, I give you this assurance, in God's loving wisdom and wisest love and generous love, at every new moment in my life these words have been in the prayer of the Church that day: and they are absolutely true:

'To him who is able to do so much more than we can ask for, or even think of, by means of the power working in us: to God be the glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus for all time, and for ever and ever! Amen.'

I offer you today the last words spoken to me by the late, great Frank Thomas, Bishop of Northampton, one of those who formed Bishop Kevin Dunn in his student days; please welcome them: it is possible to live them in the power of the spirit: tens of thousands yearn for us to live and proclaim them.

They are simply, demandingly this:

Seamus, 'be joyful'.