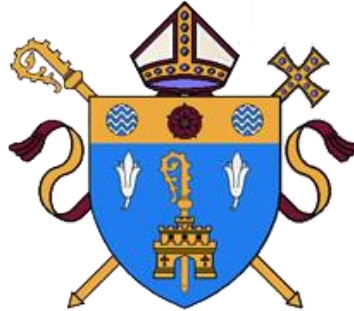


A Tribute to Bishop Campbell by Father Robert Billing

**Given at 10.45am on Monday 12 February 2018
at The Pastoral Centre, Lancaster**



The Catholic Diocese of Lancaster

Thank you everyone for gathering this morning, We gather hurriedly as a kind of representative group of priests and people, religious and staff in this local Church of ours to give thanks to God for the ministry and leadership of our Shepherd, Bishop Michael Campbell over these last ten years.

My Lord,

In Luke's Gospel (Luke 6:26) the Evangelist says– "Beware when all people speak well of you." But we need to today – we do want to speak well of you and of your fruitful and faithful ministry and achievements for the Lord and this Diocese these last ten years. On this very day ten years ago you were named Coadjutor Bishop to your predecessor, our beloved Bishop Patrick O'Donoghue – the fifth Bishop of Lancaster. Just over a year later, after a period of shadowing and learning, you would go on to succeed him as the sixth Bishop of this great Diocese.

St Augustine of Hippo would say: "For you I am a bishop, but with you I am... a Christian." Well my Lord, you have been both of these to us. So many will personally testify to your pastoral care and kindness in times of pastoral crisis. Many are thankful that you have been a Bishop to the whole Diocese, always eager to visit schools and parishes in West Cumbria, Carlisle, the Fylde, the Furness peninsula and in Preston - in times of thanksgiving and celebration as well as in times of need and distress.

All of us are grateful that, as our Bishop, you have shared your learning with us and so have taught us to love the Word of God and the Fathers, you have prayed with and for us and so have sanctified us with the Sacred Mysteries and for how you have tenderly cared for us and led us

as the Church of God – sometimes in the midst of us when we needed accompaniment, sometimes leading from behind when we might have dawdled and needed encouragement and at other times you have led from the front with great courage and boldness – risking, at times, being misunderstood and even criticized. For all this shepherding we can only thank you today.

- I am reminded seeing Canon Hart/Paul Briers (as Trustees): We can only thank you for leading us in prudent care for our limited resources – those temporal goods of the Church – with a certain fiscal discipline at Trustee level.
- I see Father Sony: We are grateful, my Lord, for your efforts to work hard to receive clergy from overseas taking their rightful place serving alongside our indigenous clergy – and serving at every level of diocesan life. Only for their ministry, many more parishes would have had to close. We are, after all, one Church, with one mission and one Lord!
- We have with us this morning the CMC Sisters/ the Sisters Adorers/the Canons of the Institute: We thank God for Bishop Michael's bold and courageous invitations to the newer religious communities of the Catholic Church to make new foundations among us across the Diocese – embracing all those venerable rites of the Church and truly legitimate liturgical forms that have always gathered the flock to the Lord and His Kingdom. As the clergy will be more thinly spread across the Diocese, going forward these religious communities promise to keep 'the home fires burning' brightly.
- It is an honour to have Bishop Mar Joseph Srampickal with us – the Bishop of the Syro-Malabar faithful of Great Britain: Mar Joseph, you often refer to Bishop Campbell as the father and founder of the Eparchy – and so it is the case that he was instrumental with the Holy See and your Major Archbishop Cardinal Alencherry in ensuring the joyful erection of the Eparchy in in Preston in July 2016.
- It is a joy to so many in Preston and beyond that due to your courageous initiative and the generous hard work of the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest and the Eparchy that three well-loved listed and iconic churches in Preston have been saved and given a new future. I say this, even as I know you have remained committed to building upon the essential and inevitable work of linking and merging our parish communities according to the vision of our diocesan programme '*Fit for Mission?*'

My Lord, as you begin to prepare for a well-earned retirement and we prepare for a time of transition and a fresh outpouring of grace with a new Shepherd - today represents a tremendous challenge and opportunity to build upon your work. Soon, a new bishop will be called to love this local Church of ours with all his heart, just as you have and just as Christ loved her and gave his life for her. That's why we all need to dedicate ourselves today — to love one another and be fruitful together for the growth of the mission of the Church.

St Augustine described the bishop's duties in the following way: "To rebuke those who stir up strife, to comfort those of little courage, to take the part of the weak, to refute opponents, to be on guard against traps, to teach the ignorant, to shake the indolent awake, to discourage those who want to buy and sell, to put the presumptuous in their place, to modify the quarrelsome, to help the poor, to liberate the oppressed, to encourage the good, to suffer the evil and to love all people."

It's true, Bishop Michael, this Church of Lancaster faces serious challenges in the days ahead. There's no quick fix to the challenges that face us. What we do in the coming months and years to respond to these challenges — that will define who we really are. And in engaging in that work, Jesus Christ is the centre of our lives and of all we do and pray.

In the meantime my Lord, Bishop Michael, may God continue to bless and reward you for your labours as the Vicar of Christ in this place this last decade and all of us in this Diocese. As for the past ten years we say 'thanks be to God' and for our future pilgrimage paths in the Lord we say: 'Yes!'

The Rev Robert Billing, BD, STL