



ARCHBISHOP OF LIVERPOOL

Installation Mass

Homily: Most Rev Malcolm McMahon OP

METROPOLITAN CATHEDRAL OF CHRIST THE KING, LIVERPOOL, 1 MAY 2014

I chose to be installed as Archbishop of Liverpool on the Feast of Saint Joseph the Worker because Joseph teaches us that we are part of God's creative plan for the world, and that we are all called to work together to fulfil that plan.

At the beginning of his pontificate, Saint John XXIII said:

“The secret of everything is to let yourself be carried by the Lord and to carry the Lord.”

That is a secret which Saint Joseph also understood. He was carried by the Lord in his acceptance of God's plan for him, and he literally carried the Lord as the guardian, teacher and guide of Jesus. There are three aspects to Joseph's life which help us to live our Catholic faith, to be carried by the Lord and carry the Lord, in the months and years ahead in this great Archdiocese which is placed under his patronage.

First of all, Joseph teaches us to dream. According to Saint Matthew's Gospel, when he found that Mary, his betrothed, was pregnant, he made up his mind to do the right thing by her; although espoused to her, he thought it would save her reputation if he were to break this promise quietly. However, in a dream, the Angel told him not be afraid to take Mary home as his wife, because she was pregnant with the One to be called Jesus, the Saviour who would save his people from their sins.

In doing this, the Angel encouraged Joseph to abandon the conventions of first century Palestine and marry Mary – which he did. It is thanks to his kindness, his obedience to the will of God, his being a 'man of honour' that, from the moment of his conception, Jesus could be loved, cared for and kept safe.

This Jesus is my Saviour, our Saviour – my Lord, our Lord; how easily can we forget that? Our principal task as Christians is to make that message known, to make Jesus present in the world of today. To do this, we must be ready, like Joseph, to break with convention, and do things differently. Joseph teaches us that everything we say and do in our personal and family lives, our parishes and schools, our convents and chaplaincies, must have as its purpose and its end the proclamation of Jesus as Lord, for he is the source and the summit of our lives.

Taking risks to proclaim the good news of salvation is the task before us as much here in the Archdiocese of Liverpool as elsewhere. Breaking with structures and conventions that give us comfort, that feed our complacency and dull our sensitivity to the demands of being a Christian, is what it means to be a missionary disciple.

This afternoon, I want all of us in the Archdiocese of Liverpool to make our own the words of Pope Francis in his Encyclical Letter *Evangelii gaudium*:

In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples. All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized.

The task of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ is for all of us. We are all called to carry the Lord and be carried by the Lord. The Archdiocese, in Leaving Safe Harbours, has already begun the 'resolute process of discernment, purification and reform' which Pope Francis demands of each Diocese, but this cannot be left to others. Guided by the Holy Spirit, we must work together, as Bishop, priests and people, to continue to hand on the Deposit of Faith, to build up the Body of Christ, to worship God in spirit and truth, and to serve our brothers and sisters.

So let us dream together about how we can better proclaim Jesus as Lord in our own lives, in our parishes, and in our Diocese. And we are called to dream this dream joyfully, filled with the hope which the Risen Lord gives his Church, and never giving in to the temptation to misery or despair, even when it seems we are swimming against the tide. As Pope Francis reminds us:

One of the more serious temptations which stifles boldness and zeal is a defeatism which turns us into querulous and disillusioned pessimists, 'sourpusses'. [Quite how they translated that into Latin is anyone's guess!] Nobody can go off to battle unless he is fully convinced of victory beforehand. If we start without confidence, we have already lost half the battle and we bury our talents. While painfully aware of our own frailties, we have to march on without giving in, keeping in mind what the Lord said to Saint Paul: 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.'

So, our dreams invite us to share more deeply in the life of God himself.

Second, Joseph was a worker, a carpenter; the reason why Pius XII established the Feast of Saint Joseph the Worker on 1st May, 'Labour Day' in many countries, was to demonstrate that God blesses and sanctifies the ordinary.

Each and every person on this earth is born with an unalienable dignity which is rooted in our being made in God's own image and likeness, as the Book of Genesis reminds us. But that dignity is a gift which has been given to us by God, and it is a gift to be realized, and the place where we realize it is work. As Saint John Paul II said in his Encyclical Letter *Laborem exercens*, 'work is a fundamental dimension of our existence on earth':

Work is a good thing for us – a good thing for our humanity – because through work man not only transforms nature, adapting it to his own needs, but he also achieves fulfilment as a human being and indeed, in a sense, becomes 'more a human being'.

Just as the people of Israel were freed from slavery and made a nation by their experience in Egypt, as a result of his second and third dreams Joseph, by his response and actions in protecting Jesus and Mary, shows that we too will be made free and become a nation, the new People of God. That is a special dignity given at our creation, lost by our sins and restored by Jesus.

We are temples of the Holy Spirit, brothers and sisters of Jesus, children of the Most High – it is a dignity that is given to us by God. But it is by work that we discover it and deepen our awareness of it.

As we care for the world around us, develop earth's resources for the good of mankind, feed our families and ourselves, we truly realize our identity as being loving, and loveable, children of God. In a changing society we must not lose this insight. Finding fulfilment for our God-given gifts of creativity and service, not giving in to pastimes and leisure activities, chasing the false gods of materialism and self-satisfaction, but being mindful of the obligations of social justice, is a challenge that faces the whole of society and not just the Church.

Third, Joseph was a family man. We all belong to different families, beginning with our parents, and as we go through life we gain, and lose, relatives and friends. We can see that in today's Mass. You are all here today because you are part of my family – and I am part of yours: my brothers and their families, my cousins and personal friends; my brethren from the Dominican order; my brother Bishops; representatives from the Diocese of Nottingham, where I have been blessed to have been Bishop for the last thirteen years; and finally my new family – the Bishops, priests, deacons, religious and laypeople who make up the Archdiocese of Liverpool, together with our friends from other Churches and faith traditions, civic society, and all people of goodwill.

God has endowed the people of Liverpool, Lancashire and the Isle of Man with many great gifts, not least constancy in our Catholic faith, a living heritage which should inspire us and challenge us. The Martyrs of Lancashire testify to their love of Jesus' name and their fidelity to the truth. Father Nugent, with his plea to 'save the child', and his extraordinary efforts to alleviate poverty, promote the welfare of children and establish prison chaplaincy, spoke to us of the need to serve our brothers and sisters, in particular the poor and the vulnerable. That mission has carried on over the years – people have been welcomed to this area from all over the world, and left Liverpool to travel and settle throughout the world.

That search for truth continues in the Hillsborough inquest, as at long last a true picture of the causes of this terrible tragedy become clear and responsibility is taken for it. It is our hope and expectation that the inquest will uncover and explain the truth of what happened so that justice will be done for the 96 and for their families, whose dignity over these last 25 years has been an example to us all.

I am honoured and humbled to be standing here in this beautiful, iconic Cathedral dedicated to Christ our King as your new Bishop, and I hope that I will repay the trust which Pope Francis has placed in me by appointing me as your Bishop, and which now you are asked to place in me as we begin to work together to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. According to John XXIII:

“The sublime work, holy and divine, which the [...] Bishops must do each in his own diocese, is to preach the Gospel and guide men [and women] to their eternal salvation, and all must take care not to let any other earthly business prevent or impede or disturb this primary task.”

My prayer today is that all of us, each and every one of us, will make the preaching of the Gospel our primary task. Just as the vocation to be holy, to be saints, is not for the chosen few but for the multitude for whom Christ shed his Blood, so too is the proclamation of Christ in the world in which we live. We proclaim it in our words, in the way in which we speak to and about one another; in our actions, in the way in which we treat other people and serve them; and in our worship, when we gather in the awesome presence of God to worship him in spirit and truth.

So today's Feast, and this Mass, invite us to place our trust more firmly in Jesus our Saviour; we are asked to dream his dreams, to do his work and to be his family.

To be a Christian is a real challenge in the world in which we live, but it is a joyful, hope-filled and life-giving challenge for which we are prepared by Christ, who gives us the grace of the sacraments to give our lives in his service to the greater glory of God. Together let us accept that challenge, and promise Christ, whoever we are, that we will be carried by him, and carry him, in every moment and aspect of our lives. Amen.

Mt Rev Malcolm McMahon OP

Ninth Archbishop of Liverpool