

2022

Bath and Wells

Archbishop's Charge

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To Our well beloved in Christ, **Noel Michael Roy Beasley**, now Bishop and Pastor of the Diocese of **Bath and Wells**, Greeting.

There are two things from the service when you were ordained and consecrated Bishop which I would like to draw your attention to. One thing you will have heard, and one thing you will not have heard.

One word that was not said, and appears nowhere in that service, is the word 'suffering'. The way of the servants of Christ is the way of Christ. It is a road on which you will experience many joys. However, it is also, undeniably, unavoidably, a way of suffering. To carry your cross on this road will at times be lonely, heavy, overwhelming, as you deal with the many challenges you will face in this role. This may come as a surprise to you: I rather suspect it doesn't.

That suffering of which nothing was said is made bearable by something that *was* said. You will have heard these words:

"You cannot bear the weight of this calling in your own strength but only by the grace and power of God."

There is a space between suffering and strength, between the unsaid and the said, into which we can invite God. A place where we invite life into the longings of our hearts, the troubles of our souls and the joys of our spirits. A time when we bridge the gap and build the relationship between He who calls us by name and gives us the choice and the strength to follow.

It is with Christ, in prayer, in conversation with the one who is always listening, who gladly bears all our burdens on the Cross. With Christ we find the journey of suffering is made luminous through His love.

My charge to you today is to Pray.

Pray that the suffering Christ, saviour and sovereign, might walk alongside you in the difficulties as well as the joys of the road ahead.

Pray that the Holy Spirit, comforter and advocate, will empower you to bring comfort and strength to the world and His church as you welcome others to the path of the Cross.

And pray that God the Father might guide you in this calling - on the good days and the bad days - by His infinite grace and power, that the world might know and believe the Good News of His Son who died and conquered death.

As a Bishop within the Church of England you are called to share in the ministry of the Gospel of Christ, proclaiming His promise of hope and eternal life in a world of death and despair. It's in this broken world that God calls you to the servant leadership which guards the flock of Christ, exercising the ministry of a shepherd striving for and upholding the unity of the Church, and guiding them in witness and service. In the uncertainty of the world, may Christ strengthen you to confidently live out the vocation to which God has called you and His Church.

May He guide you in building deeper and closer relationships with our neighbours across the nation and our brothers and sisters around the global Anglican Communion, so in our unity and our fellowship the world might know

Christ Jesus is Lord. Sharing collegial leadership of the Church of England with your fellow overseers may you discern with them, and others, the future shape of Church and its ministry as we seek to live out our vocation both locally and nationally, exploring opportunities for more effective ministry.

As Diocesan Bishop of Bath and Wells you are called to lead the Diocese in discerning its particular vision for God's ministry and mission, following His call to care for the sick, the hungry, the imprisoned, the stranger and the orphan around us and, in so doing, proclaiming the Good News of the God who came and lived among us that we might know and share His love for us here on Earth. Jesus who loved all alike, who counted tax collectors and fishermen as friends invites you to bring people to Christ's table. He calls us to build a church where each living stone is valued.

As Jesus welcomed the children, the sick and the isolated into His family, you are called to lay a place for both the young and the elderly, those who are poor and those who are wealthy, those whom society loves and those whom society despises alike, and to be a safe place where God's children may gather, in all our glorious diversity and difference, and celebrate the image of God in one another. At this critical time in our stewardship of God's creation, may you have creativity to ensure God's people are characterized by the same love for this world that caused our creator to give His son.

In the midst of much fear and uncertainty, may you encourage the diocese to be courageous in the gospel as the first disciples were, confident in their witness as St Paul was, bold in their hopes and faith-filled in their dreams of joining in God's work to make the Kingdom of Heaven known here on Earth. May you draw those you serve into ever deeper relationship, from individuals to global communities, remembering that Christ is both an intimate friend as well as King of all creation, leaving out no one in His pursuit of love and mercy.

May you recognize and empower the gifts of those whom you are called to serve, to encourage lay people and clergy alike in their journeys of discernment. The Book of 1 Peter reads 'Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.' [1 Peter 4:10]. May you draw out the unique and remarkable gifts which your flock has received from God, that each one may, in partnership, be put to the service of the Lord and His Church, for the sake of the service of God's Kingdom.

And finally, may you be present and part of your community as our Lord Jesus Christ was, in both the joy of the wedding at Cana and the suffering of the funeral of the widow's son, in sharing hospitality and friendship. May you serve those within it as Christ calls us to, and to care particularly for those who are suffering, distressed and isolated, seeking to ease the burdens of those we serve by our deeds and words.

Michael – scripture calls us to 'speak out on behalf of the voiceless, and for the rights of all who are vulnerable' [Prov 31:8], to challenge cultures of hierarchy and deference, and create a space that honours the trust and hope that people place in the church of God. You are called to be a seeker and speaker of truth and justice and ensure that the Diocese of Bath and Wells is a place where children and vulnerable adults are safe, and the highest standards of safeguarding are upheld.

Michael – all goodness comes from God alone. Tend to your own spiritual life, in prayer and study, that you may hear His word, receive His spirit, and do His work.

So may the Lord of heaven, who gives you the will to undertake these things, give you also the strength to perform them, and by His divine providence may His holy angels succour and defend you on earth; and may His Grace and Blessing be with you at all times. Amen.

Justin Cantuar
29 June 2022