

To all Licensed Clergy and Lay workers

Maundy Thursday 2008

Dear Brothers and Sisters

I am writing this early on Maundy Thursday morning. Later this morning many of us will be sharing in the Chrism Eucharist in the Cathedral, which is, for me, always a wonderful affirmation of the ministry we all share and I am grateful that so many come to participate in that time of worship together on such a special day. Not everybody can be there. I hope perhaps those who cannot might find a moment to look at my sermon, which will be on the website this afternoon.

There are three matters I wanted to share with you, as well as wanting to wish you a Happy Easter.

Bishop John Yates

Those who have served in the diocese for quite a long time will have happy memories of Bishop John Yates' episcopate here as the 37th Bishop of Gloucester from 1975 to 1991. I expect everybody knows that Bishop John died earlier in the month and his funeral was held in Winchester, where he was living in retirement. There will be a Memorial Service for Bishop John in Gloucester Cathedral on Saturday 26 April at 4.30 pm. All are, of course, welcome. Anyone wishing to robe should be in touch with the Precentor, Canon Neil Heavisides, at the Cathedral Office. We give thanks for John Yates and commend him confidently to the Lord.

Collections at Episcopal Services

There has been a tradition in the diocese for the collections at "episcopal services" to be used for particular projects. There will be two projects for the year beginning this Easter, A Rocha India and GARAS (Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers). Let me tell you a little about them.

A Rocha India is a project in the Diocese of Karnataka Central and the vision is to create a new generation of stewards for good earth keeping. A Rocha India hopes to encourage and empower children as they have the potential to change the future of our planet. At the moment it has the children of urban schools in Bangalore participating in a year long activity leading to understanding how they can create an eco friendly school environment.

The Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (GARAS) Resettlement Programme seeks to help those who seek asylum in Gloucestershire each year. These are people who have fled persecution and see our country as a safe haven from the threats and intimidation they have received. Those who are allowed to stay have gone through the full process of being checked by the Government's Border and Immigration Authority to ensure that they have the right to reside in this country and that they are truly fleeing persecution. When they receive permission to stay in Gloucestershire, they need to integrate themselves into the wider British community and this not only includes settling into the communities in which they have been placed, but also setting up a home. Because they have fled persecution in their own country, they bring very little with them and, when they seek to set up a home,

they often need basic things like bedding and pots and pans. We are looking to set up a fund to help these refugees in obtaining simple household goods.

We hope to raise £5,000 for each project in the year between Easter 2008 and Easter 2009. If you would like information about either of these two projects, please be in touch with Canon Adrian Slade at glossr@star.co.uk.

Millennium Pilgrimage

I think you already know of my plan to make a pilgrimage walk through much of the diocese in June (from the 8th to the 15th) as the final event of the Gloucestershire Millennium. I have already gathered together a small team of walkers to walk with me. There is room for a few more. I want to open up that possibility to you, the clergy and lay workers, to readers, to members of your families or to any member of your church community whom you think would bring something to the party or derive good from it. I attach the outline of the pilgrimage plans, which you are welcome to share. But I will only have six or seven places, so, if you or they are interested, please email me as soon as possible.

Happy Easter

Finally I wish you a very happy joyful Easter feast and season. May the Risen Lord give you peace and joy.

With Every Blessing

+Michael