

Homily for Ted Hogan RIP – Tuesday 13th October 2009

I am grateful to Bishop Crispian for the invitation to preach at Deacon Ted's funeral Mass. If only because I have so many things for which to thank him personally. When I first arrived in Winchester over four years ago Ted and Pat made it clear that their door was open to me at anytime and for any reason. I soon discovered that it was not only the door that was open, the whisky, usually of the single malt variety, was open as well. I know that my predecessors here in Winchester would join me in thanking Ted and Pat for their affection, hospitality and support. Over the whisky Ted was always there to listen to me with my various anxieties.

Claire has already spoken about Ted and I agreed with Claire and Ted's family that I would trace Ted's story during his time in Winchester and the Diocese of Portsmouth, which I will now do. It just so happens that Ted wrote an article for our parish magazine in the year two thousand which gives a description of Pat and Ted's life in the parish. I would like to read to you some of the details from it because Ted's distinctive style paints a fascinating picture.

Ted begins "In 1971 Pat and I came to Winchester. Through the House Groups and the Catenians we quickly made many friends and felt very much at home. I was asked to chair the Finance Committee through an exciting period when Canon France set in train a series of projects including the new Presbytery, the Parish Centre, and the recovery and refurbishment of the Milner Hall and much more.

About this time Bishop Emery asked me to help the Franciscan Sisters at Park Place who had some financial problems. Thus started a long and happy association with the sisters who have created a marvellous facility for the Diocese in their Retreat Centre – an ideal place for quiet and reflection set in lovely surroundings.

In 1984 Canon France approached me about the Diaconate, and with Pat's support and encouragement, without which it would not have been possible, I agreed. I was due to be ordained in July 1988, but sadly Bishop Emery died in April of that year. Canon France approached Bishop Hollis who was then Auxiliary Bishop in the Birmingham Diocese based in Oxford. He agreed to ordain me in St Peter's on 15 July. Six months later we were delighted when he was installed as Bishop of Portsmouth.

My initiation into the Diaconate was rather hectic, as we had just lost an Assistant Priest, and involved a number of weddings, baptisms, funerals

preaching etc in all of which Pat was an unfailing support. However, in due course we settled down into a more measured pace of life until 1991 when Bishop Crispian asked me to take over as Financial Secretary to the Diocese.

This took me into an unfamiliar world, trying to reconcile the need for financial viability with the requirement to support those working for the Lord in so many fields, often in difficult circumstances and also dealing with the many legal, property and personnel problems which arise in any large organisation, but I was always supported by our Bishop, the Diocesan staff and others who willingly gave their professional advice and help. Pat once again gave me her full support although it meant that I was disappearing each day “to the office” returning home rather late in the evening. In spite of the demands it was a rewarding experience, leaving me with a great affection and respect for our priests and the lay people working with them in the parishes. I was therefore delighted to be involved with the “Priests’ Pension Appeal”, which generated such a generous and loving response from the people of the Diocese.

It was with some relief that I returned to Parish life in 1994 to work with Canon Peter Doyle and Father Mac, who have always been so supportive and understanding.”

At the diocesan clergy retreat many of us shared our memories of Ted and I know that they would wish me to share one or two of them. One priest spoke of Ted’s patience which must have been severely tested (and this came from a priest of this diocese) dealing with awkward and difficult people like us. Those of us who received Ted’s help will remember, not only his patience but his humour and sheer professionalism in finance and in dealing with the many and varied people who looked to him for guidance and leadership. Ted was the first person to be appointed as diocesan financial secretary who was not a priest. He found himself in an entirely different world from the one to which he was used. I have it on good authority that diocesan financial secretaries wielded as much power as bishops in those days. When he took up the post new financial systems and practices needed to be put in place. What Ted achieved in the next three years was to set the scene for the introduction of modern disciplines; for those working closely with him, what was remarkable was the goodwill that he built up with all the priests in his endeavours to make the changes he believed were necessary. He was an ordained deacon, yes, but it was his personal integrity that mattered for his judgment to be accepted. A combination of objectivity, professionalism and a total belief that what he had to do was God’s work impressed all who had dealings with him then. The diocese benefited

tremendously from Ted's skill and his experience at the top of the corporate tree at GEC in Rugby and later at Financial Director at Lansing Bagnall in Basingstoke.

There are three aspects of Ted's story that I have kept until last. He was, when he and Pat lived in Birmingham, a member of the Catholic Evidence Guild who spoke every weekend at the Bull Ring in Birmingham; he developed the Journey in Faith process here in Winchester for those seeking admission to the Church and during his time as Financial Secretary Ted was one of the loudest voices telling people like me, and one or two others gathered in this church, that the diocese urgently needed a pastoral plan. Unless we have a vision and a plan how do we know that our resources are being used properly. How can we decide about this building, that school, or this project? We now have the plan. It is called "Go Out and Bear Fruit" and is four years old.

Those last three aspects of Ted's life and experience in the Church turn the focus at this funeral upon us. Publicly sharing our faith and belief in the presence action of Christ's Spirit; journeying and working with those of any faith or none who are searching for God and applying all our resources to continuing the mission of Christ in our world and culture are things that we are all called to do as members of the Church. As we pray for Ted today and as we celebrate our faith in the resurrection of Jesus which brings a promise of resurrection and human fulfillment in Christ to every man, woman child, let us not remain unchanged.

Let us allow the Holy Spirit to change us and make each of us more committed than ever to Christ's mission to proclaim his Good News to every person. The structures, the finances, the buildings are all important but not as important as the missionary task given us in Baptism.

I would like to close with two quotations. One from "Go Out and Bear Fruit". The other from the Gaudium et Spes, one of the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

"Our vision and hope is of ourselves as a gathered community of the disciples of the Lord, united by baptism and bonded together by Christ in the Eucharist. Our mission is so to live out this communion in the power of the Spirit that we proclaim the Gospel by our words and become the Good News by our way of life".

"The future of humanity is in the hands of those who are capable of providing the generations to come with reasons for life and optimism."