

**29 April 2022**

### **A Time of Transition for the Diocese**

On Wednesday 27 April 2022, it was announced that our Holy Father Pope Francis has appointed Bishop Mark to be the Archbishop of Cardiff and the Bishop of Menevia, these two dioceses being united *in persona Episcopi* (in the person of the Bishop). This news ushers in a period of transition for the Diocese of Plymouth which is governed by canons 416-430 of the Code of Canon Law.

The first phase of this period will last for two months, during which time Bishop Mark will continue to lead our diocese but no longer as its Diocesan Bishop but with the more limited powers of a Diocesan Administrator. Within eight days of Bishop Mark formally taking possession or being installed into his new dioceses – the Mass of Installation will take place on Monday 20 June 2022, the feast day of the martyrs St Julius and St Aaron in Wales, the members of the Cathedral Chapter of Canons of our diocese will meet to elect a priest to take on the role of Diocesan Administrator and, with the help of other members of the clergy and diocesan officers, he will lead and oversee the daily life and mission of the diocese, its parishes and schools until a successor to Bishop Mark is appointed by the Holy Father in due course.

During the period until a new diocesan bishop is appointed, the ancient principle *sede vacante, nihil innovetur* (when the diocese has no bishop, nothing new may be done) must be observed whereby there is a limit to the decisions and actions that can be taken, and nothing can be done which might prejudice the rights or constrain the freedom of the new Diocesan Bishop who will be appointed. However, this certainly does not mean that things must come to a halt. The Gospel of Salvation must continue to be proclaimed and the life and mission of the Church in the Diocese of Plymouth and in its parishes and schools carried forward, albeit in anticipation of the gift of a new successor to the Apostles to lead us and, through whose communion with the Bishop of Rome, our diocese is fully united with the Catholic Church throughout the world. The necessary activity and administration of the Diocesan Trust require by charity law will also continue to take place under the temporary chairmanship of the Diocesan Administrator.

So, whilst we await the appointment of a new Diocesan Bishop, a careful balance must be struck between ensuring that the daily life and mission of the diocese, its parishes and schools is supported and sustained on the one hand and acknowledging that there will be things that cannot be done or decided until a new Bishop of Plymouth is appointed on the other.

However, during this time of transition, our **primary task** as a diocese and in our parishes and schools under the leadership of the Diocesan Administrator will be to unite together in earnest prayer that:

- the Holy Spirit will guide all those involved in the process leading to the appointment of a new bishop for our diocese;
- the one who is called to take on this essential apostolic ministry among us will be given the generosity and courage to accept it;
- we - the clergy, consecrated men and women and lay faithful of the diocese - will welcome our new bishop with joy and respond eagerly to his leadership in faith and mission.

A Diocesan Mass of Thanksgiving for the leadership and ministry of Bishop Mark as Bishop of Plymouth will be celebrated at the Cathedral of St Mary and St Boniface, Plymouth, on Monday, 30 May, at 12noon. The prayers of the diocese will accompany him, too, as the Holy Spirit leads him on to the next stage in his ministry and service to the People of God.