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THE BISHOP OF COVENTRY

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Ascension to Pentecost 2016 (May 5th to 15th): Five Dimensions of Prayer and Celebration

It was really good to see very many of you at the Bishop's Study Morning last month. In the notice session, I spoke about the Ascension to Pentecost Pilgrimage of Prayer that Bishop John and I have been planning for some time. Since then you will have received the letter from the Archbishops calling the Church of England to prayer, and especially to pray 'Thy kingdom come, thy will be done'. You will have seen in their letter that Coventry Cathedral will be hosting one of the Beacon Events that will conclude their Call to Prayer. A number of clergy will have also received information about the Pilgrimage Walk, *Cloud and Fire*. Additionally, you will also soon be receiving an Overview of the Diocesan Centenary which explains that the Centenary will be launched through the Pilgrimage of Prayer.

So you can see that there are a number of dimensions that are coming together in an exciting way to form a powerful experience of prayer and fellowship, witness and celebration.

1. There is the *Pilgrimage of Prayer* which is a call to everyone in the diocese by your bishops to pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit and to meditate on scripture. More details about this will emerge during Eastertide via the Bulletin, the Website and through weekly video messages that Bishop John and I will be sending out. We will be providing a booklet with prayers and reflections to guide and support this common prayer and meditation.
2. There is the *Pilgrimage Walk: Cloud and Fire* which is an invitation to everyone in the diocese to spend time before Pentecost on a physical pilgrimage with their bishops. We aim to make the people of God visible across Coventry and Warwickshire as we walk and talk, pray and read the bible together. There is now a section of the website dedicated to the Pilgrimage Walk www.dioceseofcoventry.org/pilgrimage
3. There is the *launch of the Diocesan Centenary Celebrations* through the Pilgrimage of Prayer and Pilgrimage Walk.
4. There is the Archbishops' *Call to Prayer: Thy kingdom come* which invites the whole of the Church of England to join the Archbishops 'in a week of prayer for the evangelisation of our nation'. There is a website for the Archbishops' Call to Prayer www.thykingdom.co.uk and also a page on the Cathedral website <http://www.coventrycathedral.org.uk/wpsite/blog/2016/02/27/your-kingdom-come/>

5. There is the conclusion to the Diocesan Pilgrimage of Prayer, the Pilgrimage Walk and the Archbishops' Call to Prayer at Coventry Cathedral on the Feast of Pentecost. This will be an informal service that will include *Pentecost Baptisms and Confirmations* and will form one of the Archbishops' *Beacon Events*. It will feature a live video link with the Archbishop of Canterbury and sung worship led by Noel Richards. We also hope to be joined by some bishops from other local dioceses with their candidates for baptism and confirmation. Thanks to Lambeth funding we will be importing a high quality PA system for the event. We anticipate that the service will start at around 5:00 pm, but more details will follow.

May I ask three things of you?

First, that you ensure your parishioners are clearly informed about the five dimensions described above at all of the services on *Palm Sunday* in all of your parishes.

Second, that you consider bringing people for baptism and confirmation at the Pentecost Beacon Event at the Cathedral. This event will begin with some refreshments in the ruins of the Old Cathedral between 4.00 pm and 5.00 pm. If the weather is good we may baptise people in the ruins and then move into the Cathedral for the rest of the service, including the video-link with the Archbishop, the confirmations and sung worship led by Noel Richards. It will be, of course, family friendly.

Third, that you pray for these plans, for God's hand to be upon them so that the people of this diocese will be renewed in the Holy Spirit through prayer and so made more ready for Christian witness.

Chrism Eucharist and Farewell to Simon Lloyd

Bishop John and I are looking forward to seeing you in the Cathedral for the Chrism Eucharist and Renewal of Ministerial Vows on Maundy Thursday at 10.30 am, followed by a buffet lunch in the Cathedral. This will be our chance to say our formal farewells to Simon and Faye Lloyd and to pray them on their way. Please encourage your lay colleagues to come – members of MLT's, Wardens, Treasurers and others who may have worked in some way with Simon over the years.

And finally . . .

I would value your prayers for a visit I am making next week to the Middle East with Christian Aid. I hope to tell you more about it at the Chrism Eucharist.

With my prayers as we move into Passiontide and closer to the cross and the empty tomb.

As ever, yours,

+ Christopher