

Annunciations!

As most of us know by now, Pope Francis has appointed a new Bishop to Hexham and Newcastle. On 25 March, Bishop Robert Byrne CO will be installed as the 14th Bishop of the Diocese. A diocese is not just a geographical area but, as the Vatican II document on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church tells us, is a “portion of the people of God which is entrusted to a bishop to be shepherded by him with the cooperation of the presbytery” (the priests of the diocese). So, it is as much about the people who live here as about the area enclosed by the Scottish border, the county borders to the south and the west —and, of course, the North Sea!

Bishop Robert will be installed in the Cathedral on the Feast of the Annunciation. This is a beautiful day for this to happen. It is not long after our patronal feast of St Cuthbert and honours our other patron, Our Lady.

The story of the Annunciation is well-known. We have the account of a young, unmarried woman receiving a message from God telling her that she is high in God’s favour and that she has been chosen for a special mission. Actually, her mission is unique—to be the mother of the Most High—the Son of God—to bear the Word made Flesh into the world. She could have had little idea what the role was to entail—the joys and the deep sorrows that awaited her. We do not know how long she reflected on Gabriel’s words but it is likely that she weighed them up—as St Luke tells us later in his Gospel, Mary was someone who pondered things in her heart. Eventually, she discerned that this truly was God speaking to her and agreed to what he asked. She gave her “fiat” - “let what you have said be done to me...”

On a different scale but of great significance was the annunciation to Bishop Robert! This probably came in the form of the Papal Nuncio carrying the message from Pope Francis (and the Lord) but was also an invitation. This was to leave the places that were familiar to him and to come to a new part of the world with thousands of people whom he does not know in his pastoral care. Like Mary, he had (and has!) no idea what lies before him but has discerned that this is God’s will for him—and so, he too gave his *fiat*—his consent to what the Lord asked him to do.



He will come because of a call from God—and will himself bring messages and calls from God to each of us... just as Bishop Séamus and his predecessors have. Some will be challenging—some will be affirming—some may take some pondering. But we will each be called to hear and reflect on what Bishop Robert teaches and encourages and, in our turn, offer our *fiat* to what God seems to be calling us to do and to be.

Created for a unique purpose

Bishop Robert is an Oratorian and just a few days after the announcement of his becoming our Bishop, we also heard that one of the most famous Oratorians, Blessed John Henry Newman, is to be canonised. You might like to use one of his most popular reflections during a time of quiet prayer – for Bishop Robert – for ourselves – and for Bishop Seamus as he embarks on his retirement.



“I am created to do something or to be something for which no one else is created; I have a place in God’s counsels, in God’s world, which no one else has; whether I be rich or poor, despised or esteemed by man, God knows me and calls me by name.

God has created me to do Him some definite service; He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have a mission – I never may know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next.....I have a part in a great work; I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall do good, I shall do His work; I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place, while not intending it, if I do but keep His commandments and serve Him in my calling.

Therefore I will trust Him. Whatever, wherever I am, I can never be thrown away. If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve Him; in perplexity, my perplexity may serve Him; if I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him. My sickness, or perplexity, or sorrow may be necessary causes of some great end, which is quite beyond us. He does nothing in vain; He may prolong my life, He may shorten it; He knows what He is about. He may take away my friends, He may throw me among strangers, He may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink, hide the future from me – He still knows what He is about.

I ask not to see – ask not to know – I ask simply to be used.”

Contact Details

Head of the Department for Spirituality: Kathryn Turner
Administration Officer: Karen Brown

St Vincent’s Offices, St Cuthbert’s House, West Road,
Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE15 7PY.

0191 243 3302

E-mail: spirituality@diocesehn.org.uk



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Upcoming Events in the Diocese and Local Centres

Centre for Prayer and Mission

Icon Painting (Writing) Workshop/ Retreats

As usual, there will be two workshops:

The first is with Catherine Ferguson in **Spring Week: starting 27th May for 5 days.** Boards are already prepared.

The second with Sr Annette - **July 20-27th** Includes board preparation.

Both workshops are open to beginners as well as the more experienced.

You may want to secure these dates in your diary. Further details in due course for those who are interested.

*For further information or to book please contact
Sr Michael on 0191 5813249 |
marymichael.lee7@googlemail.com*

Ushaw College

Lent - Times of Reflection

- Wednesday 13 March 2.00pm - 4.00pm
- Wednesday 27 March 10.30am - 4.00pm
- Wednesday 10 April 2.00pm - 4.00pm

*For further information or to book please contact
Ushaw College
0191 334 5119 | meet@ushaw.org*

Minsteracres

Quiet Days of Reflection during Lent

The quiet days during Lent are an opportunity to step aside, listen to God in scripture and enjoy the peace and tranquillity of the countryside.

- Wednesday 13 March 10.00am - 4.00pm with Kathryn Turner
- Wednesday 20 March 10.00am - 4.00pm with Sr Sheila McNamara RSCJ
- Wednesday 27 March 10.00am - 4.00pm with Sr Anne McCarthy RSCJ

- Wednesday 3 April 10.00am – 4.00pm; God is Ripening, Patrick Woodhouse will lead a day on the spirituality of 'The Book of Hours' by Rainer Maria Rilke.
- The spiritual life of the Poet, Rainer Maria Rilke is explored in 'The Book of Hours', influential in the writings of Jewish diarist Etty Hillesum in her understanding of God in the face of the horrors of the Holocaust.

*For further information or to book please contact
Minsteracres Retreat Centre
01434 673248 | info@minsteracres.org*

LOOKING AHEAD DURING 2019

DIocese of Hexham & Newcastle
DEPARTMENT FOR SPIRITUALITY

SPIRITUALITY IN TIMES OF TRAUMA

Bishop John Wilson is an Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster who has considerable experience in supporting people through times of trauma. He comes with a deep awareness of the part prayer and spirituality can play in times of pain and trauma and will share some of his wisdom and insights with us.



As well as the talk from Bishop John, there will be:

- Workshops
- Spaces for reflection
- A market place offering resources

Saturday 23 March 2019
Ushaw College, DURHAM. DH7 7DW

9.45am refreshments
10.15am - 3.30pm
Soup & Roll Lunch provided

To book please complete booking form and return to:
Department for Spirituality
Telephone 0191 243 3302 | email spirituality@diocesehn.org.uk

DIocese of Hexham & Newcastle
DEPARTMENT FOR SPIRITUALITY

THE CHURCH'S MISSION TO ACCOMPANY

with Bill Huebsch



"journeys of accompaniment"
help people to "read their own story;
to adhere freely and responsibly
to one's baptismal call;
to recognize the desire
to belong and contribute
to the life of the community."

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SATURDAY 18 MAY 2019
9.45am — 3.30pm
Ushaw College, Durham. DH7 7DW

REFRESHMENT & LUNCH DONATION £10.00

TO BOOK PLEASE COMPLETE BOOKING FORM & RETURN TO:
Diocese of Hexham & Newcastle, Department for Spirituality
St Cuthbert's House, West Road,
NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE. NE15 7PY
Telephone: 0191 243 3302 | email spirituality@diocesehn.org.uk
Please make all cheques payable to Diocese of Hexham & Newcastle