

“A Treasure to be Shared”

Living a spirit of communion for personal jurisdictions.

Fr Gerard Sheehan

2015 Ordinariate Festival

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Let me begin by saying how privileged I feel to be addressing you this evening. I know that there is an interval of several hours, but I never imagined I would ever be billed as a warm up act for His Excellency Archbishop Di Noia, of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, your guest speaker tomorrow.

I would like to express my thanks to Mgr Newton, who has heard me speak about some of my ideas in private, and kindly offered me a platform this evening. Ronald Crane has been very encouraging and extremely patient in the run-up to this evening's event, and I am grateful to Fr Christopher Pearson for his welcome to this church and community.

Let me begin by going back 21 years. On November 10th, 1994, Pope Saint John Paul II promulgated an Apostolic Letter, *Tertio Millennio adveniente*, addressed to "the Bishops, the clergy and lay faithful on preparation for the Jubilee of the Year 2000". The document contains a brief introduction and five chapters. The introduction presents the main subject of the letter: the Jubilee was to be a celebration of the redeeming Incarnation of the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

Already earlier that year the first ever Bishop of Rome from Poland had, in his book *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, given us a sense of how significant the Jubilee Year would be for a world sadly lacking in hope. And in his Apostolic Letter, as he proclaimed the forthcoming Jubilee, St John Paul considered how his predecessors had contributed significantly in what he called “the *preparation of that new springtime of Christian life* which will be revealed by the Great Jubilee, if Christians are docile to the action of the Holy Spirit.”¹ A “new springtime of Christian life... if [we] are docile to ... the Holy Spirit.”

¹ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 10.11.1994, 18

St John Paul's biographer, George Weigel, comments that the Pope looked to the Jubilee as "a moment of evangelical possibility in the wake of a century of winter." And Weigel continues, "The year 2000 should be marked, not by millenarian frenzy, but by a new spirit of attentiveness. The entire purpose of the Great Jubilee [was] to get the Church to listen to 'what the Spirit is suggesting to the different communities', from the smallest families to the largest nations."²

This focus on listening and docility to the suggestions of the Holy Spirit was to find an echo in Pope Benedict XVI's Apostolic Constitution, *Anglicanorum Coetibus*, establishing personal ordinariates, where in the very first paragraph he speaks of how

"[I]n recent times the Holy Spirit has moved groups of Anglicans to petition repeatedly and insistently to be received into full Catholic communion individually as well as corporately"³.

I want to establish a connection here between the expectation that attentiveness and docility to the Holy Spirit will inspire new responses on our part that will in turn impel the Church on her journey at the start of the new millennium, and to say that the personal ordinariates are a part of that movement, in that they are at the service of what is a key feature of the Church's understanding of herself. Let me explain.

Going back some years again, following the extraordinary events of the Great Jubilee of 2000, St John Paul immediately set about drawing up a specific blueprint for the Church's life in the century and millennium that was beginning. One "important area," he wrote, "in which there has to be commitment and planning on the part of the universal Church and the particular Churches" would be "*the domain of communion (koinonia)*, which embodies and reveals the very essence of the mystery of the Church."⁴ He goes on to be even more specific and demanding, when he writes in *Novo Millennio Ineunte*:

"To make the Church *the home and the school of communion*: that is the great challenge facing us in the millennium which is now beginning, if we wish to be faithful to God's plan and respond to the world's deepest yearnings."⁵

² George Weigel, *Witness to Hope. The Biography of Pope John Paul II*, New York 1999, p. 744

³ Benedict XVI, Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus*, 4.11.2009

⁴ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 6.1.2001, 42

⁵ *Ibid.*, 43

In my opinion, we have here in those passages from Pope St John Paul the key to the topic I have been asked to consider this evening, namely, the interplay between Personal Prelatures and Personal Ordinariates on the onehand, and the local Dioceses where they carry out their mission on the other. It all boils down to the practical expressions of this beautiful theological notion of communion, “the very essence of the mystery of the Church.”

In contrast to that spirit, those of you who are regular readers of *The Guardian* newspaper online may well have been reminded of one of the reasons that contributed to your decision to follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit, when you read the headline last Wednesday to the effect that the Archbishop of Canterbury plans to loosen the ties of the divided Anglican Communion. Justin Welby, it is said, will call a meeting of the leaders of 38 national churches and suggest that while they can all call themselves Anglican, “there will no longer be any pretence that this involves a common discipline or doctrine”⁶.

It seems to me that when we reflect, as we are hoping to do this evening, on the practical exchange of gifts between what canon lawyers might call ‘personal jurisdictions’ and ‘territorial jurisdictions’ (between a personal ordinariate or prelate and a local Church in the form of a diocese), we are entering into a discussion on the specific manner in which *we* are called to participate in this challenge of which St John Paul writes, namely, the challenge to live genuine communion within the Church: unity in diversity. The way we experience our own identity and how we put this at the service of communion in the Church, is at the same time a sign of our acceptance of how the Holy Spirit has guided us, and a seeking to understand the purpose of his ways for us.

If we consider in the first place our simple condition as baptised Christians, even before we go on to think of ourselves as belonging to any particular structure within the Church, we might reflect initially on how we ourselves understand, practise and promote a *spirituality of communion*, as ordinary baptised Catholics. St John Paul in the same number of *Novo Millennio Ineunte* from which I have already quoted goes on to explain what for him this means in practice:

“A spirituality of communion also means an ability to think of our brothers and sisters in faith within the profound unity of the

⁶ *The Guardian* online, 16 September 2015

Mystical Body, and therefore as "those who are a part of me". This makes us able to share their joys and sufferings, to sense their desires and attend to their needs, to offer them deep and genuine friendship. A spirituality of communion implies also the ability to see what is positive in others, to welcome it and prize it as a gift from God: not only as a gift for the brother or sister who has received it directly, but also as a "gift for me". A spirituality of communion means, finally, to know how to "make room" for our brothers and sisters, bearing "each other's burdens" (Gal 6:2) and resisting the selfish temptations which constantly beset us and provoke competition, careerism, distrust and jealousy."⁷

We can just savour a few of those ideas for a moment: "those who are a part of me"; "deep and genuine friendship"; "to see what is positive in others"; to see that as a "gift for me"; to "make room" for others; "resisting ... temptations...[to] competition, careerism, distrust and jealousy."

The goal of embracing this spirit of communion is a task for and implicates the whole Church, for all our brothers and sisters baptised into Christ, and sharing the grace of belonging to the Catholic Church, be they Latin Rite, Maronite, Melkite, Syriac, Greek Catholic, Ukrainian, or whatever. All of us are called to this task of charity. As St John Paul says,

"Communion is the fruit and demonstration of that love which springs from the heart of the Eternal Father and is poured out upon us through the Spirit which Jesus gives us (cf. Rom 5:5), to make us all "one heart and one soul" (Acts 4:32). It is in building this communion of love that the Church appears as "sacrament", as the "sign and instrument of intimate union with God and of the unity of the human race."⁸

At the same time, it has to be said that our engagement with the broader Church will flow from and mirror our spirit of communion within that little part of the Church where God's Providence has placed us. The first communion I must live is with those with whom I worship side by side, those who share the same heritage, those who have a similar background; for clergy, it is first manifested in the particular fraternal charity lived among my presbyterate, and for all, priests and lay, a special union of charity and communion with the Bishop, Ordinary or Prelate, as the case

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 42

may be. For many of you the first communion to be achieved is that of all within the ordinariate, and within your own group. That is where you will find yourselves working on the practical expressions of communion, at times at the level of simple acts of patience and charity, at others the more theological but no less important aspect of communion with the Ordinary, as the one appointed by the Roman Pontiff and entrusted with the pastoral care of those who make up the ordinariate⁹. All of those acts, no matter how simple, be they of kindness towards another member of the ordinariate or of respect towards your Ordinary are part of the building up of the whole Church.

At this point, I want to make special mention of what I am going to call an “affective” and “effective” communion with the Ordinary, as an affectionate and a practical manifestation of this responsibility, since the power (*potestas*) entrusted to him is *vicarious*: that is, it is “exercised in the name of the Roman Pontiff”, as stated by Pope Benedict in *Anglicanorum coetibus*¹⁰. The unity of the ordinariate around its Ordinary is a sign also of the communion of the ordinariate with the Roman Pontiff. Since, as Pope Benedict goes on to say, the power of the Ordinary “is to be exercised jointly with that of the local Diocesan Bishop”¹¹, the Ordinary is himself a principle expression of the communion between the ordinariate and the local diocese wherever the ordinariate has a presence. This is also the mind of the Church as laid down in the *Complementary Norms* issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith at the same time as the Apostolic Constitution, which state that the Ordinary is a member of the respective Bishops’ Conference and works together with local Bishops, maintaining “close ties of communion”¹².

Connected with that I would like to draw attention to the fact that the ordinariate is, through this particular link with the Apostolic See manifested in the Ordinary’s sharing in the *potestas* of the Roman Pontiff, an expression of the presence of the Universal Church in the local Churches. This idea was expressed in 1992, well before the establishment of personal ordinariates, in a *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church understood as Communion* from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and signed by its then Prefect, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. There we read:

⁹ Benedict XVI, Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus*, 4.11.2009, IV

¹⁰ Ibid., V, b

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Complementary Norms for the Apostolic Constitution Anglicanorum Coetibus*, Articles 2 & 3

“For a more complete vision of this aspect of ecclesial communion -unity in diversity- one needs to bear in mind that there are institutions and communities established by the Apostolic Authority for specific pastoral tasks. They belong *as such* to the universal Church, though their members are also members of the particular Churches where they live and work. The manner of belonging to the particular Churches, with its own particular *flexibility*, takes different juridical forms. But it does not erode the unity of the particular Church founded on the Bishop; rather, it helps endow this unity with the interior diversification which is a feature of *communion*”¹³.

I find it significant that the principal signatory of this letter, who has dedicated so much of his life to the understanding of the Church as communion both as a theologian and in his service of the Church as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, should be the very man whom Divine Providence chose to establish as Bishop of Rome the “Personal Ordinariates for those Anglican faithful who desire to enter into the full communion of the Catholic Church in a corporate manner”¹⁴. If I may speak in this way, you are a particular *baby* of our dear Pope Emeritus, and I have no doubt that you find in your hearts a special affection for him personally, as well as an abiding sense of gratitude towards him.

So, what is the mission or the purpose of the personal ordinariates? Can an ordinariate be said to have specific pastoral task, or a charism?

In the case of Opus Dei, which is a Personal *Prelature* there *is* a specific pastoral task given to the faithful, priests and lay, who make up the prelature, and it is experienced as a vocation. The Opus Dei website puts it like this:

“The aim of Opus Dei is to contribute to [the] evangelising mission of the Church, by promoting among Christians of all social classes a life fully consistent with their faith, in the middle of the ordinary circumstances of their lives and especially through the sanctification of their work.”

¹³ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter *Communio notio*, 28.05.1992, 16

¹⁴ Benedict XVI, Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus*, 4.11.2009

The Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus* quotes *Lumen gentium* 8, and reminds us of how the “single Church of Christ, which we profess in the Creed as one, holy, catholic and apostolic ‘subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him’”¹⁵. As mentioned above, the personal ordinariates have been erected precisely *for Anglicans entering into full communion* with the Catholic Church. So, a specific role of the ordinariates is, then, ecumenical, in the sense that they are a means whereby Christ’s prayer for unity can become a reality¹⁶. They are an ecumenical endeavour in that they are ordered to the unity of Christians in the Church founded by Christ.

The website of the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham states the following:

“One of the principal aims of the Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum coetibus* is "to maintain the liturgical, spiritual and pastoral traditions of the Anglican Communion within the Catholic Church, as a precious gift nourishing the faith of the members of the Ordinariate and as a treasure to be shared". Members of the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham bring with them, into the full communion of the Catholic Church in all its diversity and richness of liturgical rites and traditions, aspects of their own Anglican patrimony and culture which are consonant with the Catholic Faith.”

Is *this* to be understood in the sense of a specific charism, the particular grace shared in by the members of the ordinariate for the building up of the Church? Some might argue that the mission of the ordinariates is simply to receive former Anglicans into the full Communion of the Catholic Church? My understanding is that you see your place in the Church as something richer and not so functional. Not only are you a bridge into full Communion for those entering the Church from an Anglican background; you also feel yourselves called, if not necessarily in a vocational sense, certainly in an ecclesial sense, to preserve and share within the Church elements of what is termed “Anglican patrimony”.

Allow me to quote once more from your website:

“Anglican patrimony can be understood to be those elements of the

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Jn 17: 21-23

Anglican tradition which have sustained and nurtured the faith of those in the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham. This includes spiritual writings, prayers, music, as well as those pastoral practices distinctive to the Anglican tradition which have sustained the faith and longing of many Anglican faithful for that very unity for which Christ prayed. The members of the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham bring gifts to the Catholic Church for mutual enrichment, in an authentic and visible form of full communion, between those baptised and nurtured in the Anglican tradition and the Catholic Church.”

If this is, indeed, intended to be understood as the expression of a charism, a grace, a gift, a treasure to be shared for the building up of the Church, then it is something that has to be particularly valued by all who make up the Ordinariate.

That thought came to my mind two weeks ago as I read some words of the Holy Father, Pope Francis, to a group of priests of the Apostolic Schönstatt Movement, on the feast of St Gregory the Great. It seems to me that, *mutatis mutandis*, much of what the Holy Father says to them could be applied to your own situation in the life of the broader Church. I quote from his address:

“I, too, am concerned that [you] maintain [the foundational charism] and pass it on in a way that continues to inspire and sustain [your] life and [your] mission. You know that a charism is not an exhibit from a museum, which stands untouched in a display case, to be contemplated and nothing more. Fidelity to the charism, keeping it pure, in no way means enclosing it in a sealed bottle, as if it were distilled water, to prevent it from becoming contaminated by the outside. No, a charism is not preserved by keeping it aside; it must be opened and allowed to go out, so it may come into contact with reality, with people, with their anxieties and their problems. In this way, in this fruitful encounter with reality, the charism grows, is renewed and reality is also transformed, is transfigured through the spiritual power that this charism bears.”¹⁷.

You are possibly wondering why I have spent so much time reflecting on these questions, and may even have expected me to enter directly into more practical matters. However, I believe that ideas have consequences

¹⁷ Francis, Address to Priests of the Apostolic Schönstatt Movement, 3.09.2015 (Vatican translation)

and that as a general rule it is better to have an awareness of the deeper reasons behind one's actions and the principles that underpin what one does¹⁸. An aspect of much of modern life, and a trend in Anglicanism which I am sure you are happy to leave behind and not consider a part of your patrimony, is the tendency to look at things in merely functional terms, at times without giving due consideration to what is at stake. I am sure you could give lots of examples of this. For myself I recall a conversation some years ago with an Ecumenical Officer of an Anglican Diocese who described his work to me in terms of negotiation and barter regarding the mutual recognition of orders, rather than a search for truth.

Surely, the better I have an understanding of who I am and who I am meant to be, and what I am called to do in God's plan, the better I can share what has been entrusted to me for the building up of the Church. This is ultimately of more importance than simply getting on with people, being liked and popular for being nice; not that I wish to imply that those two positions are in competition.

For this reason, I wish to say that one of the key factors in your engagement with the broader Church will be the importance you give to formation within the ordinariate for priests and lay people that helps you all to understand and communicate effectively who you *are* in the Church rather than having to express yourselves in terms of what you are *not*.

In Opus Dei we have regular meetings (some as often as weekly), laity and priests, which help us to consider the practical ways of fulfilling our mission – personal holiness, missionary discipleship, the raising up to God of all human activities, especially family and work – according to our spirit. It helps reinforce the sense not only of identity, but also of responsibility before God to carry out the task entrusted to us, collectively and individually.

Within the ordinariate, I have no doubt that you also seek to find opportunities to come together for mutual support and encouragement.

¹⁸ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et ratio*, 14.09.1998, 97: "The dogmatic pragmatism of the early years of this century, which viewed the truths of faith as nothing more than rules of conduct, has already been refuted and rejected; but the temptation always remains of understanding these truths in purely functional terms. This leads only to an approach which is inadequate, reductive and superficial at the level of speculation. A Christology, for example, which proceeded solely "from below", as is said nowadays, or an ecclesiology developed solely on the model of civil society, would be hard pressed to avoid the danger of such reductionism."

These moments should be seen not only as opportunities of fellowship and socialising, but also of formation and identification with the task entrusted to you. The clearer your own understanding of your role within the Church, the more confident you will be in living it out in practice and in sharing it effectively with others.

Given the particular role of leadership and pastoring entrusted to the clergy and how inevitably, through their preaching and guidance, they influence the lives of other members of the ordinariate, the regular meetings of the priests are of great significance. As time goes by, and the ordinariate matures, your candidates for ministry will come more and more from within the families belonging to the ordinariate. They will have already experienced the life of the ordinariate, and have received a specific formation in your House of Studies, as well as sharing in seminary life together with candidates for the dioceses. They will begin their ministry having studied side by side with diocesan seminarians, and also have formed themselves from the start in the ordinariate's charism.

At the start of the ordinariate's life, your presbyterate is made up of men from different backgrounds, different experiences of churchmanship. By no means all have come from an Anglo-Catholic background; others have had little voluntary experience of anything else. They have often ploughed a solitary furrow in adverse circumstances, and been brave and courageous in following the path the Holy Spirit has shown them. Many of them could well be called "independently-minded" or "spirited". [Mgr Newton may wish to add some other terms!] Your clergy are spread around the country, often with no previous contact with each other. As Anglican priests, they may have exercised their ministry in a number of different dioceses. It seems to me that with this first generation it will be challenging, but necessary, to help create strong bonds of priestly fraternity among the clergy of the ordinariate, a true spirit of communion, unity in diversity.

I well remember one of the first meetings that the recently appointed Archbishop Vincent Nichols had with the clergy incardinated in and working in the Diocese of Westminster when he arrived. He spoke to us of how there is a sacramental bond which links us to each other, which is deeper and more important than friendship or shared tastes. I distinctly remembering him saying that no priest needs a personal invitation to an ordination or a clergy funeral; we do not go just to the ordinations or funerals of our friends. As the 2013 edition of the Congregation for Clergy's *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests* expresses it:

“The capacity to cultivate and live deep priestly friendships proves to be a source of serenity and joy in the exercise of the ministry, a decisive form of support in difficulties, and valuable help for growth in the pastoral charity which the priest must exercise in a particular way towards those confreres in difficulty and in need of understanding, assistance and support. Priestly fraternity is an expression of the law of charity and, far from being little more than a mere sentiment, becomes for priests an existential remembrance of Christ and apostolic witness of ecclesial communion”¹⁹.

In that same document, we read some practical advice in this regard:

“[The priest] will therefore make every effort to avoid living his priestly service in an isolated and subjectivist manner, and will seek to promote fraternal communion by giving and receiving – from priest to priest – the warmth of friendship, caring assistance, acceptance and fraternal correction, well aware that the grace of the Order “takes up and elevates the human and psychological bonds of affection and friendship, as well as the spiritual bonds which exist between priests [...] and find expression in the most varied forms of mutual assistance, spiritual and material as well”.”²⁰

In Opus Dei, the clergy of the prelatore, apart from contributing to and receiving the same formation as the lay faithful of the prelatore, we also come together in groups of varying sizes seven times a year, and the 2000+ of us spread throughout the world all study the same topics, which may relate to specific documents issued by the Church’s Magisterium, history of the Church, aspects of our own spirit, general liturgical norms, the study of more intricate moral cases, etc. We then also spend a few days away from our usual activities each year to look at and share experiences of pastoral practice, and the living out and communication of our charism.

In my opinion structures aimed at creating a greater sense of common purpose and mission among the *clergy* of the ordinariate will in time bear fruit also among the laity who will come to understand better the deeper nature of their own mission, beyond the historical, emotional, or sociological aspects.

¹⁹ Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests*, 11.02.2013, 37.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 36

As I have said previously, this strengthening in a sense of identity is, as I see it, a necessary preliminary for an effective engagement with the wider ecclesial body, most often experienced as local parish and diocese, and less so as deanery.

On the basis of what has gone before, I will now address the question of how we can live out this communion in practice. Here I find myself treading a little cautiously so as not to slip up. From what I have said you will, I hope, understand why I want to avoid speaking in a way that reverts to a language of “them” and “us”. Communion –unity in diversity– is at the core of our *raison d’être*.

Now, I am fully aware that when speaking more casually that can be the way we might express ourselves out of convenience or laziness. Moreover, it is how we may be considered by other members of the Church whose only understanding of ‘communion’ is as one of the seven Sacraments. However, I want to point out that *our* understanding of communion and our *living* it in practice among ourselves and with others in the family of the Church is precisely a part of our giftedness within the Church. How we speak matters, because it is a manifestation of how we think, and how we think influences how we act. Just because others may not always ‘get it’ should be no reason for us to lessen our commitment to a language of communion.

So, let me share a few of my thoughts on the matter. Once again, I will make some general remarks that can be applied to all of us, laity and clergy, and then a few points that are more applicable to the clergy. And I will speak on the assumption that most of the people here are members of the ordinariate

In the first place, I would say, be where everyone else is; don’t simply stay in safe zones. Draw strength from your fellowship among yourselves, but enjoy the freedom of being a Catholic and “belonging” wherever any other Catholic belongs. It ought to be one of the most liberating experiences for you upon becoming Catholics to know that you can go into any Catholic Church anywhere in the world and you belong there; you are there by right; you are not simply a visitor; it is your Church.

Secondly, there’s no need to introduce yourself as though you were anything different from any other ‘Catholic’. Don’t feel obliged to make some kind of a distinction. It does not cross the mind of most Catholics that they might be expected to say what Diocese they belong to; neither should you feel it necessary to, in some way, differentiate yourselves

from other Catholics. Nevertheless, if it seems appropriate to mention something, don't hide your belonging to the ordinariate.

That brings me immediately to the next point: develop a thick skin! Don't get touchy when your fellow Catholics, even priests, unthinkingly call you 'Anglicans'. Occasionally, you can make a joke of it and that works; it's hardly ever a good idea to start giving a quick lesson in theology or Canon Law. Quite early on in my priestly ministry I learned that the best way to avoid the typical question, "And what parish are you in, Father?" was precisely to introduce myself directly as a priest of Opus Dei. Often it just produced a glazed look of incomprehension. You need a thick skin, and I know that I haven't always had one.

Take an interest in what other people are doing. Don't be too keen to tell people immediately and in great detail all the wonderful work that the ordinariate is doing. It is right that you have a well run, pro-active and positive information service, and that you are getting the good news out there. However, on a one-to-one basis, it is often more effective to show more interest in what others are doing than to engage in what can be interpreted as blowing your own trumpet. Your interest in and encouragement of what they are doing will be much appreciated. Nowadays, an easily locatable and well thought out website is a very effective tool, and what you have produced together with the CTS has also been very useful.

Be pleasant. If people like you, they will trust you, even if they never understand what the ordinariate really is about. If they meet you and like you, and know you are connected with the ordinariate, they will come to speak well of the ordinariate. It is a practical every day way of living those points of St John Paul that I mentioned at the start of my talk.

Give each other the confidence to be able to say to people, "Why don't you come and see for yourself?" Living charity among yourselves and doing what you do best according to your understanding of your charism, will help you all develop the confidence to invite people personally to your different activities. One thing is the website and mailing lists; at the same time, the personal touch is also very important. And among the first people for you to be inviting to your activities are your (still-) Anglican friends. They are the ones that the Church is encouraging you to help find a way for them to come into full communion. What's more, Pope Francis has also given you further encouragement for your apostolate with people baptised as Catholics but for whom the Sacraments of Christian Initiation have not been completed. Many of them will benefit greatly from having

come in contact with you at an important moment of their lives. At the same time, you may also find yourselves having a role in helping those Catholics whose experience of the Church has until now always been in a standard parish or school setting, to discover that there are other ways of living and celebrating our Faith, with a style of language and a musical tradition which appeals more to their sensibility.

Nevertheless, we need to be realistic and have our feet on the ground, to recognise humbly that the ordinariate is not for everyone. Neither is Opus Dei. So, we must not become too upset if people do not understand, or do not appreciate what we are trying to do. At times, we have to accept that some may have a bad experience. On the one hand, they may not have been very good at understanding; on the other, we may have been very poor at explaining. The spirit of communion helps us to understand that the Church is so much greater than any of its parts. You don't have to like Opus Dei or be a supporter of the ordinariate to achieve salvation. All of us, however, do need to live charity and, at times, know how to bite our tongue. Some people can be unfair and very rude; we should try never to retaliate with rudeness. Moreover, the Church precisely wants us in the ordinariates and the prelate to be working for unity within the Church, not to be causing division. *Veritatem facientes in caritate*²¹ – proclaiming the truth in charity – should be our motto.

Whether one likes it or not, the fact is that the clergy of the ordinariate and less so of the prelate are often its most public and recognisable figures. In terms of communion, in the minds of many people our (that is, the clergy's) personal behaviour and attitudes are often and unfairly identified as the "policy" of the hierarchical structure into which we are incardinated. This places upon our shoulders a particular responsibility, since often the whole ordinariate or prelate will be judged on the impression *we* give. And more especially, it will not be so much the impression the broader laity draw from meeting us (most lay people love their priests). Often of more lasting significance is how our brother priests see us, and I am sure we are under no illusions as to the sensitivity of the clerical eye: we have sufficient planks in our own without going on to consider the motes in those of our brothers.

Before going on to consider how others may see us, I think it important for us to examine our own attitude to fellow priests. Allow me here to slip in a little story concerning Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, the successor of St Josemaría at the head of Opus Dei and the Prelate who called me to

²¹ Eph. 4: 15

priesthood. At the time of his beatification in September last year, the following story was told in an article published in *The Catholic Herald*:

“When St John XXIII proclaimed the Council, del Portillo was well known in the Vatican for his competence, intelligence and excellent people skills. He was involved in the preparatory group for the commission on the laity and was then secretary of the conciliar commission on priesthood. The commission’s work, which would finally culminate in the document *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, was very hard and frustrating, also because its members held sharply divided opinions. Its cardinal-president was often absent so del Portillo frequently led the sessions. One member later described his open and understanding manner, “intransigent with error ... but understanding with persons. He could see a positive side to everything”.

“This open spirit also showed itself towards people who were publicly critical of Opus Dei. Once del Portillo met the Swiss theologian Hans Küng, who had outspokenly criticised Opus Dei in a Council meeting. Del Portillo embraced him saying: “As Christians and priests, we should love one another.” He offered to provide him with more information about the organisation.”²²

To be able to see the positive side of everything and everyone, while being firm in holding on to the truths of the Faith. My own experience of attending Deanery meetings was transformed when I came to realise that while I may not agree with everyone who gave an opinion, if I got to know them all better, I would soon discover that there was something I could learn from everyone. To set out to discover what you can learn from other priests, rather than rushing to share your own wisdom. It’s an attitude which is picked up and appreciated. And often reciprocated. And so, there takes place the mutual sharing of gifts and treasures.

I would encourage all clergy to attend deanery and diocesan clergy meetings when possible, unless your numbers are so large that for you all to show up it could prove overwhelming for some of the others at the meeting. Nevertheless, your presence will be a sign of positive life and growth in some places where signs of stagnation and decay have begun to take hold. When it comes to speaking at such meetings, if you feel it difficult to say something positive, think twice before doing so. Your charism is for unity, for building up. It is so easy to pull down; so much

²² Fr Joseph Evans, ‘The Blessed who gave Hans Küng a big hug’, in *The Catholic Herald*, 26.09.2014

more challenging to construct, but we are talking about the ordinariate being a sign of the hope and expansion of the Church, and fundamentally being at the service of communion.

If I might presume a little, it seems to me that with the approaching Year of Mercy, a very positive contribution could be made by priests of the ordinariate offering to help with a more generous provision of the Sacrament of Penance in many places where perhaps shortage of priests makes such availability difficult. Being ready to hear confessions at a time when the parish priest is impeded could soften many hearts, as well as being a source of grace for all.

The fundamental message behind such offers is to make it plain that while you have your own mission, you are not just here for yourselves and your own interests, but as priests of the Church you are contributing, in a spirit of communion to the good of the whole Church. If I can borrow a hackneyed phrase, we have to let other Catholics know that “we’re all in this together”.

I hope that in what I have said so far this evening I have succeeded in transmitting that I believe the very existence of the Ordinariates is a manifestation of the determination of the Catholic Church to pursue the quest for Christian unity in the face of mounting difficulties²³. Your bond with the Successor of St Peter is an expression of his role as “the first servant of unity”²⁴. To those outside the Church you give a witness of the unity in diversity, even within the visible expressions of the Latin Rite. Within the Church you are a sign of the presence of the Universal Church in the particular Churches²⁵. Moreover, within the full communion of the Catholic Church you are called to share in the mission of evangelization, bringing the specific gifts that form part of your patrimony.

Nevertheless, all of this can only be achieved if we understand communion not simply as a theological or canonical notion, but as something that has to be lived and expressed in practice in sharing our daily lives with each other and with the other more traditional structures of the Church. It is our ongoing response to the suggestions of the Holy Spirit calling us to the perfection of charity, to holiness. In his Encyclical on the Church’s commitment to Ecumenism, *Ut Unum Sint*, St John Paul wrote:

²³ Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Ut Unum Sint*, 25.05.1995, 86-87

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 94

²⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, 97

“A Christian Community which believes in Christ and desires, with Gospel fervour, the salvation of mankind can hardly be closed to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, who leads all Christians towards full and visible unity. Here an imperative of charity is in question, an imperative which admits of no exceptions. [...] It is a matter of the love which God has in Jesus Christ for all humanity; to stand in the way of his love is an offence against him and against his plan to gather all people in Christ.²⁶”

The path of communion will not always be easy. It is indeed a great challenge. Nevertheless, we have been given a specific task in making it a real expression of what it is to belong to the Church. And by striving to live this spirit not only as a concept at the institutional level, but as a lived reality in the daily interaction with our brothers and sisters, we are contributing to the task of evangelisation of today’s society that must engage all of us believers. Blessed Paul VI wrote in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*:

“The power of evangelisation will find itself considerably diminished if those who proclaim the Gospel are divided among themselves in all sorts of ways. Is this not perhaps one of the great sicknesses of evangelisation today? Indeed, if the Gospel that we proclaim is seen to be rent by doctrinal disputes, ideological polarisations or mutual condemnations among Christians, at the mercy of the latter's differing views on Christ and the Church and even because of their different concepts of society and human institutions, how can those to whom we address our preaching fail to be disturbed, disoriented, even scandalised?

[...] As evangelisers, we must offer Christ's faithful not the image of people divided and separated by unedifying quarrels, but the image of people who are mature in faith and capable of finding a meeting-point beyond the real tensions, thanks to a shared, sincere and disinterested search for truth. Yes, the destiny of evangelisation is certainly bound up with the witness of unity given by the Church.”²⁷

If I may express it in this way, the Personal Ordinariates are a sign to other Christian believers of ways of entering into and living the full communion of the Catholic Church. You are a sign of hope. Through God’s grace we share a common faith. May you also be a sign, in the

²⁶ Ibid., 99

²⁷ Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 8.12.1975, 77

Church and to the world, of “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit.”

Thank you.