

Richard



Bishop of Arundel & Brighton

**PASTORAL LETTER
for Trinity Sunday
22nd May 2016**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This occasion of Trinity Sunday invites us to reflect on the wonder of the One God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The relationships that exist in the three Persons of the Trinity invite us to think about our own relationship with the One God in whom we believe and who invites us to be in relationship with Him – through the person of the Son and through the understanding and knowledge that are gifts of the Spirit.

The encounter that we have with God in prayer is, therefore, of the deepest importance in our lives. Prayer is not merely an option – it is a key element in the life of each one of us.

In this Year of Mercy we are called, by the Holy Father, to encounter God afresh in his Word to us in the Scriptures.

“[Mercy] is a programme of life as demanding as it is rich with joy and peace...In Order to be capable of mercy, therefore, we must first of all dispose ourselves to listen to the Word of God. This means rediscovering the value of silence in order to meditate on the Word that comes to us. In this way, it will be possible to contemplate God’s mercy and adopt it as our lifestyle.”¹

The experience of the Church down through the ages has brought to us a wonderful way in which to respond to the Holy Father’s call to us. *Lectio Divina* – Holy Reading – enables us to listen to God’s Word in a way that is simple and refreshing. Spending a little time each day with a short passage from the Scriptures, reading it through a number of times and pausing to allow the Word to dwell in the depth of the heart, enables us to hear what God wishes to say to us. I would recommend taking a Gospel to begin with and working through slowly, reflecting on a short passage each day.

It is truly wonderful to realise that God wishes to say something to you and to me, as individuals whom he has formed and whom he loves. Through this short time of meditation on the Word of God, we are – over time – formed by the Word. God speaks to us and we are transformed. We become the people He wishes us to be and, as the Holy Father has explained, it is only then that Mercy can truly be our lifestyle.

¹ POPE FRANCIS, *Bull of Indiction Misericordiae vultus of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy*, n. 13.

There will be many in the family of the Diocese who have already adopted this practice of *Lectio Divina*. Already, one of the great blessings for me during this Year of Mercy has been the gatherings with the young people of the Diocese – well over three hundred of them – to reflect on the Word of God in this way. Meetings with many of our teachers and in a number of parishes have provided similar opportunities. The increasing practice of *Lectio Divina* will, I truly hope, be a major feature of the life of our Diocesan family.

This prayerful encounter with God’s word to us will indeed form us as individuals as we “listen with the ear of the heart”² to the Father who loves us.

We can be formed, too, in the many groups in which we gather. There are many means of formation in the life of the Church, of course, but through opening the mind and heart to the Word of God our formation will be rooted in the love and mercy of the Father. This will have the most profound effect on the Mission to which the Lord has called us. It is a foundation on which we can build.

I cannot encourage you strongly enough to take a little time each day to reflect on the Word. Accompanying this Pastoral Letter, leaflets are available describing *Lectio Divina*.³ Take one of these leaflets with you and set aside a short time to listen to the Father who seeks to speak to your heart. Practice this Holy Reading in schools, in parish groups, catechetical formation and gatherings – for through our encounter with the Word of God we shall become a people of Mercy and enabled to carry out the Mission to which we have been called.

With every Blessing as we continue together this Jubilee of Mercy,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Bishop of Arundel & Brighton

² The Rule of St. Benedict, Prologue, 1.

³ Also available on the Diocesan Website.