**Bishop Martyn’s Presidential Address for Diocesan Synod 21 November 2020**

Let me say good morning to you all. It's very good to be able to be with you for Diocesan Synod today. And my thanks also to the Community of the Tree of Life for their opening worship. I had the privilege of spending a bit of an evening this last week with them just hearing some of their reflections as they've been praying for the diocese, and indeed, praying for the nation, joining with the Archbishops’ call for Prayer For the Nation and we are very, very blessed to have this community of young adults praying for us all.

And I wanted to offer just another image if I may; a story as well, alongside that image of the potter and the clay that the Community just referred us to. And this is just a brief verse from Psalm 122:

"I was glad when they said to me, let us go to the house of the Lord, our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem built as a city that is firmly together, to it the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, may they prosper who love you, peace be within your walls and security within your towers. I will say peace within you, for the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your peace.”

This is commonly known as one of the Pilgrimage Psalms. So the picture if you like that we can conjur our minds is that of people who've been journeying towards Jerusalem some of them travelling for days and as they arrive at just the outskirts of the city, so they're tired, they're no doubt hungry, thirsty, may be aching limbs and yet at that moment of arrival, near to their place of destination there is also a great sense of anticipation, maybe even excitement within those words. And it's at that moment when the psalmist prays for Jerusalem, praying in effect that Jerusalem would be the place which is called to be. The name itself "Jeru-salem" contains the word "shalom", "peace" or "salvation" as it's differently translated, but the prayer and effect is that Jerusalem would be the city that it's called to be. I thought that image was appropriate for today for two reasons: One, as we reflect on our journey; and then secondly, as we too pray that we would be the people that God has called us to be.

So much of our discussion this morning is going to be focused on the Shaped By God Together process, this is the latest stage of our journey together in the Diocese of Leicester. And I'm very conscious that some of you here today will have been part of that journey in the diocese for a long time. Some of you will have seen lots of bishops come and go, you will have may be even some of you remember back to the time when Launde Abbey was established as our retreat centre. Some of you will remember St Philips being established as our interfaith centre. Some of you will remember the reburial of King Richard III and the reshaping of Cathedral Gardens. Some of you will remember the infamous 2020 process.

Others of you will be coming very new to all of this and will still be learning about the history of the diocese, what I think though will unite us all at this moment in time is something of the Pilgrims; feeling of tiredness. The general sense of fatigue, which is around in our society at large at the moment, but also I sense within our churches, not just because of the journey we've been on, but, of course, also the very particular situation in which we find ourselves at the moment with so many in our society suffering with COVID or with the effects of the lockdown.

Yes, there is a general sense of tiredness around and I realise, therefore, that this is a difficult moment to be thinking about our journey and to be thinking about this next stage of our journey which we've called the Shaped By God Together process. But never-the-less I retain a hope that just like the pilgrims, you may be able to, in some way, look forward to the future and wonder at what God is going to do among us and join with the pilgrims in praying that we may be the people God has called us to be.

Today we're going to be inviting you to vote on the process of Shaped By God Together. It is, as I say, only the latest stage of our journey, It's not the destination, far from it, but nevertheless, we're going to ask you to vote, both about the process, understanding that will need to be very realistic about what we can achieve within a short space of time, but then also asking you to vote about our strategic priorities which are outlined in the paper that was sent to you.

These are all things that we've been working on for some while, it is, as I say, part of our ongoing journey. So when we talk about wanting to establish **New Communities**, we've had many new communities established already through fresh expressions of Church and through our church planting program. When we talk about Intercultural **Worshipping Communities**, again that work is well underway, we've got a long way still to go with it all, but it is already getting established in the life of the diocese. When we talk about **Intergenerational Communities**, we're talking about our schools, working with our churches, and indeed the discipleship work that goes on within our homes, particularly at this time as well. **Eco Diocese** - we've discussed before; we hold out great hopes for how we may be able to change in the coming years. And **Reconciling Communities**; we'll be touching on that in our conversations, even today as we think not only about the LLF, 'Living in Love and Faith' resources, which have recently been published, but as we look too at the Women's Ministry report, and in wider discussions no doubt we'll touch on all that's going on within our society at the moment. We want to be communities which reconcile; help people work together across differences. And, of course, at our heart we are **Anglican communities**.

These are all part of our journey and these strategic priorities will, we hope, provide the framework for this next stage of our journey as we seek to discern where God is leading us. And so finally, then that prayer that we would be the people that God has called us to be, this takes us right back to our roots, right back to our very core of who we are. You may be tired of hearing me talk about our vision as the, the Kingdom of God, of the Church as the sign, the instrument, the foretaste of God's Kingdom. You'll have heard me talk a lot before about our three key questions about discipleship, how we grow deeper as disciples, how we grow the number of disciples, how we grow in our loving service of the world. These things remain our core and in all our discussions. I'm determined that we keep them at the centre of who we are. But our prayer is that we would become the people that God has called us to be, we're not there yet, none of us are, and that's why the Church is the space that is given to us to become the people that God has created us to be.

So I hope you'll join with me, and indeed join with pilgrims down through the ages, as we continue to journey on, and to pray that we would become the people that God has created us to be.