



The Bishop of Chichester
The Rt Revd Dr Martin Warner

February 2024

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Welcome to 2024 and a fairly short *Ad Clerum!* There are just four things I wish to bring to your attention:

- i. Keeping a good Lent
- ii. Participating in the Chrism Eucharist
- iii. Funding
- iv. Looking ahead

The first is the most important: keeping a good Lent. As some of you will know I was invited to participate in the Synod about synodality, in Rome last year. It was like an extended retreat on how to listen to the Word of God, Jesus Christ, as the Holy Spirit whispers to us the things he said and did and asks us to do now.

If you can book into your busy schedule a time and place that will inspire this listening and encounter with Jesus in your life, throughout Lent, you will be working well. You will be recovering the love of your vocation and the Church.

And here's a text that might accompany you. It's an unusual translation of 1 Cor 1:30, which bears some similarity to the King James Version: "But you, God has made members of Christ Jesus and by God's doing he has become our wisdom, and our virtue, and our holiness, and our freedom."

He is **your** wisdom, and **your** virtue, and **your** holiness, and **your** freedom. This gift (grace) offers us release from the draining tyranny of managing other people's expectations. It calls us to nurture the new civilization of love which is cultivated by sacred worship as it subverts the world's limitations. It should fill your heart with joy.

Second, the details for the Chrism Eucharists this year:

On Tuesday 26 March, the Bishop of Horsham will preside at the Eucharist and bless the oils at St Mary's, Horsham at 12 noon.

On Wednesday 27 March, the Bishop of Lewes will preside at the Eucharist and bless the oils at St John's, Preston Park, Brighton at 12 noon.

I shall be present at both locations to preach and to receive the renewal of commitment to ordained ministry.

As your bishops, we look forward to sharing with you this important moment in our life and apostolic ministry together.

Third, funding. You will be aware that the consequences of the Covid pandemic, and the national cost of living crisis presents us with financial challenges. Under the leadership of John Preston, our new Diocesan Secretary, we are making good progress on meeting these challenges and finding that there are some very welcome ways in which they might help us to move to a position of sustainable funding for the ministry and witness that constitute the Church of England's life in this diocese.

We are aided in this by grant funding through the Archbishops' Council that will help us address the Net Zero target, intergenerational evangelisation, and racial justice. You will see advertisements for posts that are funded by external grants, not by parish share.

Fourth, looking ahead. This Year of the New Testament draws our attention to the context of liturgy and worship in which the sacred Scriptures of the Church were formed into a new canon.

It will lead to 2025, the Year of Faith, in which we celebrate the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea and the formation of a creed. It will also mark the 950th anniversary of the re-founding of this diocese at Chichester.

We shall be hosting a visit by the Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew, who is the first among equals in the Orthodox Churches. He will address an international conference in Chichester, which you will be able to join on-line. There will be deanery events to celebrate this year of faith, and it will culminate in a clergy conference at Kent University in Canterbury, from the evening of Sunday 7 September to lunchtime on Wednesday 10 September.

Please book those dates if you have not done so already.

So may the Lord bless us, keep us from all evil, and bring us to eternal life.

+Martin