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It's nice to be home.

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Today has been a most remarkable day for me. Fifty six years ago my parents and godparents took me to the font in St George's Church, Mossley to start me off on my Christian journey. This morning at 8 o'clock I was back by that same font, to remake my baptismal vows and begin a short journey, by foot and tram, that would symbolise the rather longer journey that has brought me, at 2 o'clock this afternoon, to the doors of Manchester Cathedral, and to the beginning of the next stage of what God has in store for me, for us. Thank you to those who have accompanied me today, and who are here with us now. Thank you to all you who have been with me on the journey thus far: my family, and my friends from school in Saddleworth and Manchester, from King's College in Cambridge and Queen's in Birmingham, from my various parishes in the Diocese of Sheffield, from my Housing and public involvements, and from the Diocese of Worcester, where I took up the post of Bishop of Dudley exactly 13 years ago today. But it's nice to be home.

In a sense that's all I really want to say. And if you're in a church tomorrow and somebody asks you, "What did he preach about at the Enthronement?" I'll be entirely happy if you have remembered enough to tell them, "He said that it's nice to be home". But, I'm a preacher, and I've got the floor, so you're not going to get away with something quite so short and sweet. Home merits a few minutes of reflection.

A place of belonging

Home is first of all about belonging. The story of Israel across the Old Testament is of an intense relationship with a particular piece of land. I'm making my own first ever visit there next year, and I hope that a number of you will accompany me on the trip. Nobody can begin to understand the present day Middle East without taking seriously the way people feel a deep bonding with particular places. More prosaically, it feels really strange nowadays to drive past the house where my mother lived for almost half a century and not be able to walk in, put the kettle on and flop down on the sofa. The fact that it now belongs to somebody I don't even know seems weird. Belonging really matters.

The Christian tradition takes the notion of belonging and asserts with particular force that our primary belonging is to God. Rooted in him, we then belong to and with particular circles of human beings and particular places.

Our churches carry an enormous weight in terms of how they facilitate and enhance our belonging with God. But that means they can also deny belonging, reject, exclude and make unwelcome. I'm delighted that the Diocese of Manchester is committed to growing the church. I share that commitment enthusiastically. It requires that our churches become places where people belong more deeply, where a wider range of people belong, and where they belong in greater numbers. There will be times when that calls us to sacrifice something of our own comfort in belonging, in order to enrich the belonging of others. It is then that the depth of our true belonging above all to God will be tested.

What we do in the church and what we do to serve wider society must be woven from the same cloth. I try to keep my involvement in Social Housing rooted in that theological notion of home as belonging. I am passionate about people having places to live that are not just bricks and mortar but homes. Places where they can feel safe, be healthy, find privacy, build relationships, welcome others. Places from which they can go out into neighbourhoods that offer them work, leisure, worship, education, social interaction and travel. If you're denied these then you cannot really belong. You will hear much from me in the times to come about the impact of political decisions on human belonging, and I make no apology for that. I do intend to keep my hands dirty and my head informed by working with one of our local Housing Associations. I want everyone in a Greater Manchester, from the longest inhabitant to the newest asylum seeker to be able to say of here, "It's nice to be home".

A place of hospitality

A few years ago I was honoured to be invited to open a new centre in Birmingham that was housing a number of different refugee organisations. I can't remember a word of the speech I made on that occasion. But I recall vividly the words of one refugee. "Until now", he said, "We have been grateful to be received as guests. But today this is our place and you are here as **our** guests". For that man to have somewhere that we could be the invitees and he the hosts was the most profound expression of homecoming. I've seen something of that same reality here, when I was invited to lunch, a couple of days ago, in a Manchester vicarage which is now leased out as home to an asylum seeker couple, in partnership with the Boaz Trust.

Hospitality is not an option for Christians, it's at the core. The duty of welcome owed to the stranger is a repeated refrain of the Old Testament. It's there again in the Gospels when Jesus remarks on the lack of hospitality shown him by a prominent citizen to whose house he's been invited. It's there when he warns us that true hospitality is not what we give to our friends and colleagues, but what we offer to those who have no means of repaying. God's own hospitality is shown in his opening the gates of his Kingdom to us notwithstanding our radical unworthiness of his invitation. It's a hospitality that doesn't wait for people to respond and *come* in. It's a hospitality that goes out into the streets, searches for the lost and the needy and *brings* them in. That's what we've just heard in the Gospel: Jesus found Andrew and Andrew went to fetch Peter.

The call to mission, which the Diocese of Manchester has heard, is a call to radical hospitality. Hospitality is about creating the space to fit the guest, not squeezing the guest into what fits the host. It will vary from place to place and from person to person. The goal will be, as I found in Birmingham, that those who arrive as guests turn into hosts, and allow us to become their guests. I fear that at times the welcome in many churches is along the lines of, "You can come here, as long as you like what we like, and even better if you are prepared to lend a hand to help us do it". What I want us to be saying is more like, "Come here and share with us some of what you like, we'll share our stuff, and together we will grow into something new for the sake of God and of others".

Reflecting on hospitality has drawn me ever more deeply into the political minefield that is migration policy. I've learned that all serious research finds that those who have come to this country to live their lives among us, enrich us both culturally and economically. That chimes with my own life experience, from the Jewish boys I sat next to at school, to the French managers in the Mossley factory where I worked one summer (we must have

been the only mill in Lancashire that had French cuisine on the canteen menu), to the Muslims and Sikhs in Dudley who challenged me to ensure that my faith impacted on every aspect of my life. I rejoice to have been called to work in a place as diverse as Greater Manchester. I am especially grateful to all of you who in whatever way represent aspects of that diversity here today. As a senior friend in the policing world said to me some years ago, "Diversity makes the work easier and the results better". It's nice to be at home with you.

A place of retreat

I've said a lot about the world facing aspect of what we do as Christians. Yet a home is also a place to retreat to. Jesus's ministry is a wonderful balance of the inward and the outward. One moment he is fully engaged with the crowds in some Galilean town, the next he is off in a quiet spot, utterly absorbed in prayer. He tells his followers to be those who feed the hungry and clothe the naked, and he also tells them to go into their private room, shut the door, and pray to their father in heaven.

A couple of years ago I decided to test the theory that Christians come in two sorts: the extroverts who are good at building social relationships and the introverts who are attracted to prayer. I ran a survey across about 1500 churchgoers. (Here's a warning to the Diocese of Manchester, prepare yourselves for the occasional survey form!) Even after accounting for every possible causing factor I found to my great delight, that the more often people pray, the more they build social relationships. There isn't a choice to be made between strengthening our prayer lives and our social interactions, the two run side by side.

I can add stories to the statistics. I've met volunteers in foodbanks who have been drawn deeper into prayer and understanding because they have needed those resources to sustain their outward actions. I've seen it in the New Monastic communities that it is my privilege to travel alongside. When women and men engage together with drug users or asylum seekers, or looking after a retreat house, it often reaches the point where they need not just individual lives of devotion to sustain them, but a rich corporate life of prayer and spiritual discipline. I know that the Franciscan shape of my individual life would be unsustainable without my being a member of a Franciscan community. Archbishop Justin has placed a revival in Religious Community life alongside spiritual deepening as the first of his three priorities for the church. Amen to that.

I want to call us here in the Diocese of Manchester to a deeper spiritual discipline. I am hopeful that some of you might invite me to lead a quiet day, or retreat, where we can explore techniques of prayer together. I hope that many of us will commit ourselves to keeping a Rule of Life, to meeting with a Spiritual Director or Soul Friend, to Prayer Walks and pilgrimages. I yearn to see new religious communities spring up in our towns. I pray that our clergy and lay people will find a healthy balance between the inner and the outer world.

I'm delighted to be coming to a diocese which shares with my previous one that the Bishop's Staff genuinely appear to like each other and enjoy one another's company. But I'm giving my colleagues warning here and now, that we as a group need to go beyond that. We need to model in our corporate life the same style of leadership rooted in prayer, sacrament, bible study and fellowship that we are exhorting others towards. We need to be a group committed to being at home together.

Endpiece

Looked at superficially today can appear to be about the power of the bishop, so well encapsulated by that wonderful word, "enthronement". But as I read today's Order of Service it seems to say more about the accountability of the bishop: accountable to the Mandate read out from Archbishop Sentamu; accountable to the Dean for keeping the statutes of this Cathedral; accountable to the commission given me at my anointing by the archdeacons; accountable to you wider community representatives who have welcomed me; accountable to the *Five Marks of Mission* that underpin the calling of the Anglican Communion; yet accountable above all to the Christ who has called me and set me in this place. The bishop's seat in the cathedral is a very visible seat (at least from the choir) and to be enthroned in that seat is to be made visible and thereby more readily accountable.

I've tried to embark on that accountability by sharing something of what is dear to me, and that I believe myself called to engage with you in, here in Manchester, within this theme of "home" as a place of belonging, of hospitality and of retreat. The Bishop's Chair is quite a scary place to sit, but it is my home in this cathedral, as I return to make once again my home in the Diocese of Manchester, and to be at home with you in God's Church. But we all of us make our home here knowing that we do so just until the day when we are eternally united in the place where we can see Jesus face to face. And, with a smile on our lips, say the words that declare the fulfillment of our destiny, "It's nice to be home".