



# CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

ENGLAND AND WALES

Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Antonio Mennini  
addresses the Bishops of England and Wales

9 MAY 2011, HINSLEY HALL, LEEDS

**Dear Archbishop Nichols, I thank you sincerely for the words of welcome that you addressed to me on behalf of all of the Bishops. It has been a great pleasure meeting you and already working with you since my arrival in this country on 21 February.**

Right away you showed me a kind British hospitality by coming to Heathrow Airport to welcome me in your own name and on behalf of CBCEW. I remain ever grateful; first impressions, it is said, matters a lot. Since then, and especially since the presentation of my Credential Letters to Her Majesty the Queen on 2 March, I have been able to meet some of the other Bishops, both individually and at group functions. It has been enriching and also fun sharing your experiences. (His Eminence Cardinal Cormac has been a great support at these early stages of my mission, demonstrating a fraternal concern, and inviting me to his "Palace" at Chiswick).

Dear Brother Bishops, I am indeed pleased also to meet all of you at your plenary session, which is one of the main avenues through which a Bishops' Conference determines how to carry out those functions entrusted to it by the Church on behalf of the Christian faithful in view of promoting that greater good which the Church offers humankind, especially through forms and programmes of the apostolate which are fittingly adapted to the circumstances of the time and place.

This could be described as among the reasons why the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI established a Pontifical Council for the New Evangelisation of countries of long-standing Christian tradition, and encouraged you to avail yourselves of its services in addressing the task before you (Address to the Bishops of England, Scotland and Wales, St Mary's Oscott, 19 September 2010). The Blessed Pope John Paul II had earlier called on the Church to become deeply committed to the urgent demanding task of evangelisation in a new spirit that re-launches the community of believers to face the new challenges of our time. As he wrote in *Redemptoris Missio*: "After preaching in a number of places, Saint Paul arrived in Athens, where he went to the Areopagus and proclaimed the Gospel in a language appropriate to and understandable in those surroundings (cf Acts 17:22-31). At that time the Areopagus represented the cultural centre of the learned people of Athens, and today it can be taken as a symbol of the new sectors in which the Gospel must be proclaimed." (*Redemptoris Missio*, n. 37c).

As Pope Benedict XVI has said on many occasions, we live in a secularised world where everything seems to be relative and nothing is acknowledged as absolute. While addressing

all of you at his meeting with the Bishops of England, Scotland and Wales in the chapel of St Mary's College, Oscott on the occasion of his historic Visit last September, he recalled how recently he was able to welcome you to Rome for the Ad Limina visits of the two Episcopal Conferences during which he spoke with you "about some challenges you face as you lead your people in faith, particularly regarding the urgent need to proclaim the Gospel afresh in a highly secularised environment". He also added: "In the course of my visit it has become clear to me how deep a thirst there is among the British people for the Good News of Jesus Christ. You have been chosen by God to offer them the living water of the Gospel, encouraging them to place hopes, not in the vain enticements of this world, but in the firm assurances of the next." The Holy Father has also insisted on the personal witness of all Christians, recalling that the only book that people still feel willing to read is the book of personal and ecclesial witness.

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate, let us therefore continue, with our Christian brothers and other believers, to be for the world what Cardinal Suenens called the "soul supplement". I am happy to tell you that besides Catholic Bishops, I have been able to have brotherly meetings with Archbishop Rowan Williams and with some other non Catholic religious leaders; it is interesting to note they share this view. After my seven year mission in the Russian Federation, where I had the opportunity and privilege of meeting closely with two great Patriarchs and knowing the Russian Orthodox Church pretty well, I hope that my mission here will also enable me to know and share our concerns with the Church of England and other churches and religious denominations in this country.

As you know, following the proclamation made by the Holy Father, the Holy See is preparing the Ecumenical Meeting of Assisi. That meeting, as similar previous meetings, will certainly be an occasion to highlight what we can commonly offer to our society.

Dear brother Bishops, I have the honour to tell you that during my meeting with the Holy Father before I left Rome to come here to take up the function that he had entrusted to me, he asked me to bring his pastoral solicitude to all of you and to the clergy, religious, faithful and people of Great Britain. He recalled keenly the hospitality he had received from Her Majesty and Her Majesty's Government, and also from the Church and the British people. He remains grateful to all of you. He also reminded me that he had asked you to be "generous in implementing the Apostolic Constitution Anglicanorum Coetibus" (Address to the Bishops of England, Scotland and Wales, St Mary's Oscott). In his name, I wish to thank all of you for the way you have meticulously carried out that mandate. At the same time, I wish to congratulate and encourage Monsignor Keith Newton who was appointed first Ordinary of the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham, and pray for the continuous development of the relations between Anglicans and Catholics in this country.

I also use the occasion to congratulate Bishop George Stack who has been appointed Archbishop of Cardiff, and pray for the success of his pastoral ministry not only for that Archdiocese but also for the Church in Wales and of course for this Episcopal Conference. As you know, there are other Dioceses (also in Scotland) that need to be provided for. The Apostolic Nunciature has paid deserved attention to these "Provvisas" and will continue to do so, and perhaps we might be having other appointments in the near future. I thank all of you for the care and immediate attention you have always given to the letters and questionnaires of the Nunciature on these important matters.

Before I conclude, I also think of the introduction of the new translation of the Roman Missal, which is a great opportunity to look once again, along with our priests and people, at the liturgy and to grow in our understanding as well as in the worthy celebration of the Eucharist. It is also a time for sensitivity towards those persons who are perhaps less enthusiastic about this, because we, as well as the faithful, do not always find change easy.

Finally dear Archbishops and Bishops, I wish to assure you that I have come as a brother to work with you and for this local Church. As I express appreciations for the fraternal support already received, I pray that you will continue to see the Representative of the Holy Father in your midst as a brother, with whom you serve the people of God and all men and women of good will in this country.

I pray that the Lord gives you courage and enthusiasm in your respective ministries and may the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, intercede!.

Thank you for your attention.

**Archbishop Antonio Mennini**  
*Apostolic Nuncio*