

**Bishop Crispian's Homily**  
**at a Mass of Thanksgiving in the Cathedral**  
**for God's blessing on the Living Our Faith Campaign**

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

In the spring of 2007, we held a meeting of clergy to discern whether the time was ripe to launch a major fund-raising campaign in the diocese, the purpose being to set up a capital resource within the diocese for the implementation of the Pastoral Plan *Go Out and Bear Fruit*.

In principle, the idea was accepted and we set about more detailed planning. The Trustees of the diocese gave their support to the project and the Living Our Faith Campaign was born.

We originally planned to start in the autumn of 2008 but the economic situation in the country dramatically worsened at that time and we decided to put the campaign on hold.

However, two parishes – Hampshire Downs and Waterlooville – were anxious to move ahead because they both had major projects in hand, not the least of which was the building of a new church in Waterlooville for which they had been waiting and hoping for more than 25 years.

These two parishes started their campaign about a year ago and others have followed suit. All in all, we now have 42 parishes which have either finished their campaigns or are very close to doing so. A further 63 parishes will be starting shortly and the whole diocesan-wide campaign will be completed – more or less – by the end of May 2010.

The results have been spectacular, thanks to an enormous amount of dedication, commitment and hard work from priests and people alike. We have a diocesan goal for the campaign which has been set at £9 million and to date we have received pledges from over 2000 people of nearly £7 million.

My purpose in inviting you here today is so that we can together give thanks to God for his evident blessing on what we are trying to do, and for me to thank all of you, who represent so many others, for the enormous generosity that you have shown in giving your time, your talents and your treasure – a true exercise of Christian stewardship – to this work. You have shown a remarkable commitment and willingness to invest in the future of our diocese. It is vision and your love of the Church which has brought to where we are today. I am humbled and grateful.

The vision is encapsulated in the Pastoral Plan which is being undertaken and implemented for the future flourishing of our diocese. Your generous giving has been your investment in that future,

We need the fruits of this campaign for the implementation of the Pastoral Plan and in particular for the recruitment and training of new priests, for the resourcing and training of lay people so that they can, with greater confidence, take their proper place in the life and mission of the diocese. We need funds, as I have already mentioned, for the building of new churches and for the conserving and development of older ones, providing facilities which will further build up our work of evangelisation. And then, and not least, each parish has projects of its own, so the campaign is also dedicated to making possible the realisation of these dreams and hopes.

The Living Our Faith campaign is about growth and development – the Pastoral Plan is about new work which needs the new money that the campaign can provide. As a diocese, although not rich, we hold our own financially, but only by doing nothing new. The Living Our Faith campaign is not about paying off debts or filling in black financial holes. It's about building for the future; it's about evangelisation; it's about enriching the quality of our Christian life and discipleship; it's about equipping ourselves to make a real contribution to the common good and to the wider society in which we live. We are not called to live in a self-satisfied ghetto, but to be missionary and apostolic.

I am overwhelmed and humbled by the scale of the generosity of your response to the campaign and if, as the response to our Psalm says today, "The Lord takes delight in his people", I can say with great feeling that this poor bishop takes delight in his people who have supported so wonderfully the vision that we have for our future in the Lord.

The Living Our Faith campaign is truly about going out to bear fruit, fruit that will last. It is about investing in and giving an account to the world of the hope that is in us. It is about thanking God for gifting us everything.

Up till now, the Campaign has been in parishes; from today, it is diocesan-wide and it belongs to everyone who loves the Church and who wants to invest in its future in our great diocese of Portsmouth.

Thank you all once again and God bless you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Thompson', written in a cursive style.

January 9<sup>th</sup> 2010