



## THE BISHOP *of* OSWESTRY

The Right Reverend Paul Thomas SSC

3<sup>rd</sup> October 2025

### **A Pastoral Letter to the Clergy and People of the See of Oswestry**

Dear Fathers, Dear Deacons, Dear Friends in Christ,

It was announced earlier this morning that the Bishop of London the Rt Revd & Rt Hon Sarah Mullally DBE has been nominated by the Crown to be the next Archbishop of Canterbury. On behalf of us all, I wish to express the goodwill and good wishes of the See of Oswestry to the Archbishop-designate and assure her of our prayers as she prepares to take up the responsibilities of this office.

The appointment of the first woman Archbishop of Canterbury is undoubtedly an historic moment in the life of the Church of England. It is also a natural and inevitable out-working of the decision taken a little over a decade ago by the General Synod to admit women to the episcopate.

For those who advocated for that change, news of the Bishop of London's nomination to the See of Canterbury will be the cause of much rejoicing. To Catholic Christians, however, who faithfully seek to live out their vocation in the Church of England, today's news is likely to be received more mutedly and reflectively, perhaps even with some concern.

I understand those concerns which is why I write to you now as your Bishop and Pastor. I want to encourage each of you to receive and interpret today's news, even if you should find it unsettling, within the framework set out in the *House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests* and the Five Guiding Principles it embodies. [Click here](#)

The House of Bishops' Declaration recognises that a fundamental ecclesiological change has been brought about by the admission of women to the historic episcopate in the Church of England. For this reason, the Declaration emphasises the need for all members of the Church of England to devote their energies to seeking out the many 'degrees of communion' that exist within the Body of Christ when communion in the sacraments is impaired or imperfect. It also outlines the arrangements for sacramental ministry (i.e. the ministry exercised by Bishops and Priests) which Catholic Christians require if they are to have confidence in the ministry and sacraments they receive. In short, the Declaration addresses comprehensively the very issues which today's

announcement brings sharply into focus. I ask you, therefore, to pay careful attention to the terms of that Declaration and to find in it, as I do, a settling and steadying wisdom for these times.

I also ask you in the coming days and weeks to read and study together with fresh interest the statements by the Council of Bishops of The Society first published in 2015 called *Communion and Catholicity in the Church of England: A Statement of Principles* and *A Catholic Life in the Church of England: A Statement of Policy and Pastoral Guidance*. [Click here](#)

Taken together, these two statements reflect deeply upon what it means to dwell in the gift of 'Full Communion' and how Catholic Christians can have sure confidence to do precisely this within the Church of England by means of The Society - the ecclesial body established to express, deepen, and guard our unity in the sacraments which is the essence of living a Catholic Life.

I am certain that in a close and reflective reading of the sources commended in this letter, we will find robust and renewed confidence to navigate these times with fidelity to Christ and the Universal Church he established to be his Mystical Body. As Pilgrims of Hope, let us journey on with unshakeable resolve, knowing that in following Christ and keeping the Catholic Faith we are treading the way that leads to eternal life.

In the joy of the Lord,

✠Paul Oswestriensis