

Pastoral Letter for the 19th or 26th October 2008

My dear people,

It is a long time since I wrote to you and this, as most of you will be aware, is because of illness. By the time you read this, I will have had my second operation this year. Before going into hospital again, I would like to greet you at what is a time of global financial crisis. I really feel that this crisis shows how fragile the structures and systems are that we depend on for our security and prosperity. Hopefully it will make people ask the question of where our true security lies. We know it is in Jesus Christ, the Lord of creation, the One in whom we were created and who we look forward to meeting when he comes again in glory. It is important that we turn to the Lord in prayer each day so as to find confidence and stability in our lives. Sickness also shows us how fragile we are. Lately I have been struck by how many of the psalms are an acknowledgement of human frailty and an act of faith in the power of God who has all things in his hands. I think of the verses like the following:

“Oh peoples bless our God
let the voice of his praise resound
of the God who gave life to our souls
and kept our feet from stumbling.

For you, O God, have tested us,
You have tried us as silver is tried,
You led us, God, into the snare;
You laid a heavy burden on our backs.”

Constantly in the psalms we have complaints against God side by side with expressions of total trust in him. I think these are emotions we all share.

You will be reading or hearing this letter in the month of October, the month that is particularly dedicated to Our Lady. The references to Mary in the scriptures when taken together provide us with a complete picture of what it means to be a Christian. In the Annunciation, she accepts the will of God and is filled with the Holy Spirit. We too have received the Holy Spirit and we should never forget that God dwells with each one of us. We are bearers of the Spirit of God. In the Visitation, Our Lady goes to her cousin – goes out to someone in need. We all need to be there for one another. We depend on the support of others. At the foot of the cross, Mary gazes into the face of her Son who is her Saviour and ours. We too should keep our eyes on the Lord and trust that he is active in our lives.

Last week I visited one of our parishes to celebrate its centenary and one of our primary schools in order to bless their new buildings. I came away feeling grateful for all the love and commitment that goes into building up the life of our parishes and schools. I wish to encourage you in all your endeavours and assure you of my blessing and my prayers.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Archbishop of Southwark

Given in Southwark
on 7th October 2008
Our Lady of the Rosary