

BISHOP FRANK DOUGAN'S PASTORAL LETTER FOR **COMMUNICATIONS SUNDAY**

“Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As we come to the end of our Easter season, those final words of Christ should be the words that ring in our ears every day. They are a command that the Lord made to his disciples before he ascended to his heavenly Father, and they are a command he makes to us daily.

Christ's earthly mission was marked by an urgency, a restlessness, that took him from place to place proclaiming the Good News. That urgency and that mission was passed on to his disciples so that others would come to believe through their witness. That was the mission of the Church then, and that remains her mission now.

So how, in the Church in Scotland, must we respond to that command?

First of all, we do so in our own communities, our homes, our workplaces. The best way for someone to encounter Christ is through a person of faith. That means you. You could be the best chance a person might have to see what faith in Christ is all about. If it means so much to you, then a friend or a colleague might begin to wonder what you have that they don't. It's not very glamorous, but your day-to-day faith can be a real sign of the Christ who wants to be present to others in their day-to-day. Will you be a living sign of the presence and love of God to your neighbour?

And we proclaim the Good News collectively, through our parishes, our dioceses, and as members of the Catholic Church spread throughout the world. Just look at how people engaged with us after the death of Pope Francis and at the election of Pope Leo. There was a depth of feeling that stretched beyond the Church and was more than mere curiosity. It was perhaps a good reminder that if we as a Church can capture people's imagination, we can also reach out to their souls with our message of Hope, the Hope that is rooted in the risen Christ.

To do this the Church has always used the various means of communication to spread the Gospel, and we still do. We use print, traditional media and social media to reach out to people with our Good News story. These can be instruments for great good and we should use them. We use them to proclaim Christ to the world, and to offer a word of welcome to the stranger. They can be a particular help to the stranger who wants to come in but doesn't know how.

Not everyone can make that first physical step into a church. It's not that easy if you are coming for the first time. If they can take a peek through something like a social media post, that might be the thing that helps them overcome their uncertainty. Not everyone will be lucky enough to have a face-to-face encounter that brings them to Christ. So, we must use all the means available to reach out to them. It is not good enough to wait for our brothers and sisters to come to us. We must do all we can to go to them.

Here in the Church in Scotland, through our National Office for Communication and Evangelisation, we plan to build on the work done by groups, parishes and dioceses and produce quality content across the various media platforms so that we can keep on spreading the Word. I am going to ask for your financial support. And that support will help us as the Church in Scotland to use all the means of communication to help bring others to Christ. I look forward to sharing with you the work of this Office which will develop over the coming months. You will see how it truly responds to the urgency of Christ's Mission.

In the meantime, please continue to pray for the spread of the Gospel, and please do support this weekend's collection.

On the day of his election, Pope Leo said this from the balcony of St Peter's: "Together, we must look for ways to be a missionary Church, a Church that builds bridges and encourages dialogue, a Church ever open to welcoming, like this Square with its open arms, all those who are in need of our charity, our presence, our readiness to dialogue and our love".

On this Communications Sunday, let us renew our commitment to open our arms to others so that they may receive the welcome offered by the risen Christ. Let us go and make disciples of all nations.

Yours in Christ, Bishop Frank Dougan, Bishop of Galloway