

Statement from Mgr Mark O'Toole on being appointed Bishop of Plymouth

I am deeply humbled that the Holy Father, Pope Francis, has appointed me the new Bishop of Plymouth. Recognising that I am a sinner who experiences the love and mercy of the Lord Jesus, I embrace with my whole self this deeper call to service in His Church. I know that the example and witness of Pope Francis will continue to inspire and shape my ministry as Shepherd to all in the Diocese, especially to serve the poor, the weak, and those who feel alienated from God, as I work alongside fellow-Christians.

This part of the country is known for its outstanding natural beauty, and this is mirrored in the gracious welcome shown to the newcomer by its people. I look forward very much to putting down firm roots in the Diocese and making my home in Plymouth. I know I can count on the prayer, co-operation and support of the people, the religious and especially the priests of the Diocese who are renowned for their quiet heroism, fidelity and dedication. You will all show me what it means to be your Bishop. I am grateful, too, that Bishop Christopher will be nearby so that I can draw on his wisdom and experience.

My own priestly heart has been formed in the Diocese of Westminster and I have been richly blessed by the faith and witness of many – bishops, priests, seminarians, religious, and lay men and women. I look especially to the outstanding leadership of my three Archbishops - Cardinal Basil Hume OSB, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor and Archbishop Vincent Nichols. Each of them has taught me so much. I am deeply grateful for the friendship and love of so many in the Diocese and I ask their continued prayer. I will miss especially everyone at Allen Hall. I have seen how essential the vocation of the priest is for our Church and our society. I hope I can continue to make its promotion a priority in this new mission.

I entrust the whole Diocese of Plymouth, and myself, into the loving care of Mary, our Mother, as we set out on this journey together, seeking also the intercession of St Boniface and our diocesan saints, especially St Cuthbert Mayne.