

When Bishop Michael died in July, the diocese became 'Sede Vacante' (*literally meaning: 'a vacant seat'*). The bishop's Cathedra (*his special seat in the Cathedral*) has no occupant and this will remain so until a new bishop is appointed and he is ordained (*or installed if already a bishop*), as the Fourth Bishop of East Anglia. It is just over 10 years since we were in this same position, when Bishop Peter Smith moved to become Archbishop of Cardiff. Little did we know on the 19th March 2003, when Bishop Michael was ordained in St John's Cathedral that he would be with us for such a short time. God's ways of working are not always clear to understand, but we walk in faith and need to give thanks to God for Bishop Michael's time amongst us and for his leading us in Word, Sacrament and in the Witness of his Life, most especially in those final months as he bore so courageously his illness.

Now is the time to move forward and to be ready to welcome Bishop Michael's successor. The picture of the Cathedral and Narthex building which you will find on the cover of the new Directory is rather like a parable for us. Just as the new connects so well with the old, but is distinct in its own right, so I am sure our new bishop will build upon the legacy of the previous Shepherds of our diocese but he will also take us forward in faith into new places. There are many challenges for us to face in the coming years – fewer priests to serve in our parishes; the growing secularisation of the society in which we live as well as the other huge challenges so many people face every day here at home, as well as in other parts of the world.

Many people have commented on the 'Welcome' that the new Narthex building at our Cathedral presents to both visitors as well as to parishioners from across the diocese. The most important public face that we present to others must be that of 'Welcome' and hopefully later this year we will have the opportunity of extending a welcome to our new bishop.

Finally I would like to thank all those who are ensuring that the day to day activities of the Diocese continue during this interregnum. It is important that the Diocese is in good spirits as we pray for our new bishop, for those responsible for choosing him and for the one the Lord already has marked out for the Diocese of East Anglia.

With all good wishes,

Fr David Bagstaff

Diocesan Administrator