THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF
ARUNDEL & BRIGHTON

A note to the people of the Diocese from Bishop Stephen Wang

11 November 2026

Dear brothers and sisters across the Diocese,

I want to thank you for your prayers and support over the last few weeks, and for the warm welcome that you have given me. The day of my ordination at the Cathedral was such a happy day, with so much beauty and so many graces. It was an extra joy to be able to celebrate with many of you from across the Diocese at Worth Abbey on the following Saturday. A few days later I went to Westminster Cathedral to say thank you to clergy and friends in the Diocese there. I think I need another retreat just to ponder these very special memories and take things in!

I've settled into new home in Pease Pottage. My office is at The St Philip Howard Centre in Crawley, just a couple of miles away. I appreciate the sense of community there and working closely with colleagues in the diocesan team. I feel very supported by the wonderful people who are working for Arundel & Brighton.

I am very gradually getting to know our Diocese. It has been a joy in these first few weeks to spend time with the Moderators, the Council of Priests, the College of Consultors, the Trustees, and parish secretaries. I am beginning to get to know the work of the different departments that support the Diocese, and I have had some lovely visits to Ladywell Convent, to Brighton, and to the Cathedral. On Sunday just gone I was able to celebrate Mass in my home parish of Our Lady of Lourdes, Harpenden, where I was ordained a priest.

I wanted to share with you a couple of thoughts that I shared with the Council of Priests recently about how I am approaching these first few months in my new role:

One of my priorities will be getting to know our parishes, communities and religious houses. I'm also talking to our Education Service about how I can begin to visit our schools, which are such an important part of the mission of the Church. And I will be having three regional meetings with our priests and deacons later in the month.

I hope to make some informal visits to our communities, simply to celebrate Mass and have an opportunity to greet people. I've set aside the weekends for this, starting in January. I hope to keep these initial visits simple and informal. They will be a way for me to visit our communities and get a feel for our Diocese, and a way for any parishioners who wish to celebrate Mass with their bishop and say hello.

You can guess that as your new bishop I have been asked about the Pastoral Plan. It will obviously take time for me to fully understand the needs of the Diocese. But it's important that I give some direction now, so that our pastoral planning is not left in limbo. I believe I have had enough time to consider the direction we should move in.

My desire is to build on the work that the Diocese has begun under the leadership of Bishop Richard. I am committed to the Pastoral Plan, with its focus on Prayer, Formation and Mission. I have been inspired by its vision for renewal, and I would like us as a Diocese to recommit to that vision.

It's my desire that we continue to move forward with the conversion of our deaneries into our newly constituted parishes, with priests working *in solidum*, so that we can support each other more effectively and use our resources to serve the mission of the Diocese. To this end, I have asked the Moderators of the new parishes to continue the work that was begun with Bishop Richard.

I know there will be much to learn, and we will need to make adjustments to the Plan as we go along, especially in the details of how it may be implemented locally. I also appreciate that there are still many uncertainties about the implications of the Plan for our local communities and for the lives of our priests and deacons. I want to listen carefully to these concerns. But I think the key elements of the Plan will revitalise our Diocese and bring us closer together in communion and mission.

Please continue to keep me in your prayers. I entrust my ministry and your intentions to Our Blessed Mother, to St Philip Howard, to St Wilfrid, and to all the saints of our Diocese. I pray every day for the people and the mission of the Diocese.

+ Stephen Wang

Bishop of Arundel & Brighton

