

## ***Farewell Address of His Excellency Archbishop Claudio Gugerotti, the outgoing Papal Nuncio to Great Britain***

Every human story has an end. Only God is eternal. And since his name is Love, only Love is eternal.

Your Eminence, dear brother bishops, priests, brothers and sisters, I have come to the end of my service in Britain as the representative of the Pope, our common father.

I am most grateful to Cardinal Nichols for arranging this celebration of Holy Mass as a sign of a farewell which, for every Christian, is a goodbye - if not on this earth, then in the Jerusalem of heaven. Thanks also to those who have travelled here this evening to join in this moment of prayer.

My time here has not been long. One part has been marked by the isolation of the pandemic, which has severely limited travels and meetings. In the remaining part, I have tried to accept the invitations to meet our beautiful Catholic communities, especially the students.

I found there an unmistakable fragrance, a marked identity, and the pride of having suffered for one's fidelity to God and the Pope. I said that even those who are not practising Catholics feel an indelible seal in their hearts. Here I became aware that being Catholic is not a biological given, but a daily choice that can cost a high price.

I met people in dire straits, especially victims of abuse and migrants. I have met a vast number of Catholics who, often in collaboration with those who belong to other confessions or religions, generously give their hearts, time and means to help their brothers and sisters in need. They do this with great simplicity and respecting the dignity of others with exquisite sensitivity.

I have prayed in communities that love the liturgy very much, honour singing as a true instrument of praise, and appreciate the beauty of gestures and objects.

I met the bishops, gathered in their assemblies and, where possible, individually in their dioceses. I thank them for making me feel like a brother and a friend.

I visited Catholic schools, an extraordinary resource, despite the present difficult times, for teaching a reason to live and to die, which goes beyond the myths that last one day and then die out.

I have maintained cordial relations with those who belong to the Anglican Communion, other confessions and religions. I greet them with respect and affection that has its foundation in faith. We often forget what importance faith has as a sure foundation of a healthy and honest civil life.

I visited the authorities. A privileged moment, one that will forever remain etched in my soul, was attending the funeral of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, a particularly dense moment in world history. There I realised how symbols matter no less than food for people's lives. A woman symbolising great values made us all more worthy, more noble, more interested in the common welfare, in high ideals, less vulgar and selfish. As His Royal Highness Prince William told me: 'I felt that my grandmother was, to a certain extent, the grandmother of the whole world'. And in the moved and sympathetic reaction of millions of people, I perceived that there is still a place for those who want to be worthy of the name of human being, and that each of us carries within oneself this desire and aspiration, even if it is often hidden or disfigured by fashionable ideologies and, above all, by the inordinate hunger for money. This excess is contrasted today by a shortage that worries everyone.

I thank God the Father for the gift of having been with you. I thank you, for having seen in me, beyond my limitations, the values of that and especially of him whom I have had the honour to represent. I have tried to express to you how much the Pope and the entire Catholic Church love and esteem you.

I apologise to all if I have failed to meet anyone's expectations or if I have not been able to give what was rightly expected.

I ask everyone to remember me in prayer, so that I may serve the Church also in the new task that Pope Francis has entrusted to me in the Vatican.

Thank you, my dear ones. May the Lord, who is Love, bless you all.