

Bishop Crispian writes:

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Last Saturday I celebrated a great Mass of Thanksgiving with many of you in the Cathedral. It was thanksgiving for my 75th birthday and for the 23 years which I have been privileged to spend among you as your Bishop. But, most important of all, it was a Mass of Thanksgiving to God for great graces and blessings that He has poured out on the diocese in recent years.

But, as I said last Saturday, if we have achieved anything during the last 23 years, it has been in no way just my doing. It has been my privilege and blessings to be the shepherd of the flock but what we have achieved has been due to the fact that you, dear sisters and brother, have responded to God's grace to deepen our sense of communion for mission.

We have come a long way during my time as bishop and I have always tried to be faithful to my episcopal motto that we should always act "under the guidance of the Gospel". I think that has become a motto, or watchword for us all, and we have been abundantly blessed as the gathered disciples of the Lord, proclaiming and living his Gospel to build up his Kingdom in this part of our land.

In the course of the Mass, many things were said about my ministry that I find difficult to believe. There have been lots of mistakes and false starts over the years but you have always been most patient and when necessary, most forgiving. I have tried to do my best and if I have offended or upset anyone during this time, then I ask for forgiveness.

These years have been a wonderful time for me and if I needed any evidence of the affection and love in which we hold one another, then the support, love and concern that you have given me over the last few months when I have been ill have been wonderfully sustaining.

In the course of the Mass, a presentation of gifts was made to me and I have to say that I am overwhelmed by your generosity. But what else can I say except a heartfelt and sincere 'thank you'. You have been so very kind and part of me knows how little I deserve that. But, bless you and thank you. You have been instrumental in giving me the best 23 years of my life.

I wish you every blessing and pray with you now as we await the appointment of a new bishop. If you give him even half as much love as you have given me, he will be very blessed and he will lead the diocese into pastures which are new and rich.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Crispian", with a small cross-like symbol at the beginning.