

## **Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Dear Parishioners,

The most important thing any of us should read is the Pastoral Letter issued by His Grace the Archbishop on 31 October and due to be read in all churches of the diocese this weekend. A copy will be available as an insert in the bulletin this weekend and it is essential that all of us read the letter. As its title suggests, this letter is pastoral in tone, self-effacing in its assessment of objective if uncomfortable truths, open and candid in its approach and, above all, setting a complex and painful issue, which has loomed large in Church life here and abroad for the best part of twenty-five years, in the context of the fundamental law the observance of which is incumbent on all Christians, namely charity. We will all benefit from reading it and reflecting on its contents and message.

When I was working for the European bishops, it often struck me that what was lacking in commitment to the ideal of European integration, the ambition of the EU's founding fathers, was a sense of ownership of the project among the citizens. If people were to feel that the project was *ours/theirs* then they might come out and vote in the European elections, they might be less cynical about perceived machinations in Brussels and "gravy trains", and might seek to brief themselves on the EU's achievements. Such was my case, yet it fell more on deaf ears than galvanise my client group, i.e. the bishops, into enthusiasm for the EU and its future.

Now again a parish priest, I may have put Europe and its future on ice and focused my mind on matters more parochial and less ambitious in scale, but that idea of ownership has never left me. The celebration of All Saints and All Souls were a reminder to me, a new boy on the block after all, of how long and how far back memories go in the settled community which is OL & St. Anne. It is really good to hear people refer to 2 South View Avenue as "our" church. At a time when our world is in unprecedented fluctuation, it may be even more imperative to reflect on that shared ownership of our parish and deepen our own sense of belonging. The EU project has run into difficulties because too few people any longer have that sense of belonging to the project and of a project that belongs to them. It would be a great pity if we were to allow a similar attitude to creep up on us in regard to our parish community.

**Fr. Patrick**