



MESSAGE FROM BISHOP PHILIP

to the Clergy and Faithful
of the Parish of St Vincent de Paul, Southampton
to be read out on
27th September 2025

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today, we give thanks to God on the fiftieth anniversary of the dedication of this fine church in honour of St Vincent de Paul. Bishop Warlock chose St Vincent de Paul to be the patron of this parish. It was Bishop Emery who opened the parish. We thank God too for the clergy, religious and parishioners, past and present, who built this church, who have served here and who have built up the Catholic community in Southampton. I have enjoyed reading the celebratory leaflet and especially the "our memories" section. It is heartening to read from parishioners who have been in the parish for over 50 years – what a treasury of memories!

We rightly call a Catholic church the 'house of God' and the 'gate of heaven,' since here Jesus lays down his life for us in the Mass and makes Himself available to us in the Blessed Sacrament. This is why it is important to keep our churches open. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis said that the Church is called to be "the house of the Father, with doors always wide open. One concrete sign of such openness is that our church doors should always be open, so that if someone, moved by the Spirit, comes here looking for God, he or she will not find a closed door" (47). To mark this fiftieth anniversary, I ask you as a community to find new ways of doing this, so that everyone in Southampton can easily come here to meet the Lord and to adore Him in the Holy Eucharist.

Our parishes are never ends in themselves. They exist to serve the needs of those around, especially those without faith and hope, and those who are poor or on the margins. Today, as we thank God for this church, let us also give thanks to God for all the Christian service that has been given in this place. Let us ask Him to make us an ever more holy family.

With my prayers and very best wishes to you all on this very happy occasion.

In Corde Iesu

+ Philip

Bishop of Portsmouth