

# A true frame for our lives



BY BISHOP JONATHAN, BISHOP OF PORTSMOUTH

I have two siblings: an older sister and younger brother. Recently, as our mother's death approached, we were drawn together by her bedside. We shared tears, memories and moments of laughter too. A box of photos, found under a bed at my mother's house, prompted all three.

There are fabulous hairstyles, flared trousers and poignant reminders of people we love and miss. Some pictures need framing; others need tucking back under the bed! I plan to take time to find the right frames and to value our newly discovered treasure.

When we set something in a frame – a photograph, or indeed, our lives – we indicate the value invested within it. It's not a case of 'any old frame will do'. The right frame will help place a snapshot in perspective and add meaning or significance to the picture itself. This raises a wonderfully Lenten question about the framing of our lives. In this first Lent as your bishop and pastor, I'm prompted to think how we might frame our new beginning and life together in the Diocese of Portsmouth.

As we seek to live, pray and serve the Kingdom of God together, is there a framing perspective within which to set our life in its truest context? A framing to which we might return each day, whatever the joys, sorrows or challenges? Is there a frame which will return us

to the treasure of the Kingdom, the radiant beauty of Jesus Christ and the significance of all that we are and do in Christ's name? I think there might be. I'd like to propose two words as candidates: thanks and praise.

I give thanks and praise to the Christlike God for Bishop Christopher and Sally; for Bishop Rob and the senior team in the diocese. For their unstinting service, love and wisdom. I'd like to frame this new beginning by giving thanks and praise for the faithful, inspirational and often unnoticed ministry of those lay and ordained across the diocesan community of communities.

The pandemic has been exhausting for many; devastating for some; and has made many of us feel vulnerable. I thank God for your persevering faithfulness, and because you have continued, by God's grace, to keep living, praying and serving the Kingdom in strained and strange times. I thank God for the privilege of being called to join with you all. I thank God that the Crucified and Risen One sees us (flares, wounds and all), knows our story and will not be without us. God is for us, and for the whole world, in the humility and gentleness of Christ's presence.

How might we frame our days? Why not 'frame our days by thanks and praise'; that'll surely do.

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