

'Time to Say Goodbye'

Andrea Bocelli's famous song, *Con te Partirò*, in the first verse, has the expression: *manca le parole* – 'I don't have words'.... It's difficult to find words, words to do justice to such a range of feelings, of memories, of all that fills one's mind and heart. Sometimes, we find that others have words to say what we feel.

A few years ago, Pope Francis in one of his weekday Masses in the chapel of Santa Marta said:

'One of the steps a pastor must take is to prepare himself to bid farewell - in a good way, not to leave half-heartedly. The pastor knows that he is on a journey. "I am not going into retirement. I am going elsewhere to serve, always with a heart open to the voice of God. I am not the centre of history... I am not the centre. I am a servant." All of us as pastors must take our leave and step down, (as St Paul did in Ephesus), with love for Jesus Christ and faith in the Holy Spirit.'

Pope Benedict, announcing his surprising resignation, said: *'I have come to the certainty that my strengths, due to advanced age, are no longer suited to an adequate exercise of ministry.'* He went on: *'I thank you most sincerely for all the love and work with which you have supported me in my ministry – and I ask pardon for all my defects.'*

I can do no better than to try to make these pontiffs' words my own. These past nine years in St. Joseph's have been the high point of my priestly ministry.

Maybe so many years in teaching ministries have been a long preparation for such an exalted task – to serve in St. Joseph's. From teaching, I succeeded in becoming a learner again. From the remarkable people of St. Joseph's, I have learned so much about living our faith. For that, and for so many lessons and experience, I can only offer my profound, prayerful gratitude.

This wonderful parish will always be in my thoughts and memory, but most especially, in my daily prayers. In the fifth century, St. John Chrysostom wrote to his people from exile:

'Yet where I am, you are there too. Distance separates us, but love unites us...my soul will live and be mindful of you. You are my light. The sun's light is useful for daily life, but the light of your love fashions a crown for the life to come.'

Pope Benedict: *'And now let us entrust the Holy Church to the care of our Supreme Pastor, Our Lord Jesus Christ, and implore his Holy Mother Mary so that she may assist us.'*

Oremus pro invicem – Let us pray for each other.

With every Prayer and Blessing, and with great affection,

Monsignor John

