

**Homily of Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran
on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee
of Canon Roger Greenacre
Anglican Cathedral of Chichester – 29th September 2005**

Some years ago, I was walking down a street in Paris, a street near the *Rue Auguste-Vacquerie* where the Anglican Church of Saint George is located. A woman, upon noticing my clerical attire, did an about-face: she stopped me and said to me in French: “Excuse me, *mon Père*, but in seeing you dressed as you are, I suppose that you are an Anglican priest?”

But if I speak to you this evening, this is not because I may be a more or less successful clone of an Anglican clergyman. It is because of the long friendship which binds me to Roger Greenacre, from whom I have learned so much. I am also aware of speaking in the name of all those present and echoing their sentiments when I say: “Thank you, Lord, for having shared Roger with us on our journey”! It is always salutary, on the occasion of a jubilee like the one we are celebrating today, to realise that our spiritual and human growth depends in great part on the persons who have helped us to see more clearly, and ultimately to set out on, the right direction. God wanted us to be saved by each other; one by the other. Never alone. The Church, as the community of the redeemed, exists for this reason!

Yes, this evening, we give thanks to God for using the talents of our friend Roger to announce the Gospel of Jesus and to work for unity among Christians. These are the two “passions”, in the true sense of the word, for which Roger lived and suffered.

On this day in which the Christians of the West celebrate the Feast of the Angels, our thanksgiving naturally transforms itself in a “con-celebration” with those creatures whose vocation is to sing the glory and goodness of God thrice-holy.

With Nathaniel, we know that, thanks to Jesus, the heavens are no longer closed, but totally opened by the Son of man. Ever since Jesus, the Word made Flesh, entered human history in the incarnation, humanity entered a new era – a time in which God is close to men and women, a time in which heaven is wedded to earth and we are reconciled with God. Every liturgical assembly experiences this for itself, and it gives witness to this before the world.

I believe that this presence of God on the journey of men and women through their earthly life has been at the heart of Roger Greenacre's apostolate. Others would undoubtedly be better qualified to reflect on his fifty years of pastoral service. I would like, however, simply to share with you, before God, what I perceived to be the convictions of our friend. They are the convictions which not only inspired his ministry, but also enlightened my own life experience. I would like to evoke three of them:

- the priority of the Liturgy as the place of encounter with God;
- the attention given to the life and questions of our contemporaries;
- the care given for the unity of Christians.

The LITURGY is a field where you gave the best of yourself, Roger. I remember that I received from you a copy of the *Book of Common Prayer*, and I discovered that magnificent English which I once heard you pronounce in the Church of Saint George: "*The scripture moveth us in sundry places to acknowledge and confess our manifold sins and wickedness...*". What memories! The beauty of the places, of the vestments and of the music was also one of your constant interests. But, above all, the proclamation of the Word of God was one of your passions. As a young seminarian, I noticed the care with which you prepared your homilies. You taught me that when we have the unmerited privilege of commenting upon the Word of God for our brothers and sisters, we cannot be content with being an amateur! Your parishioners will have learned from you that one cannot be a Christian alone – "*no man is an island, entire of itself*", as the poet John Donne put it in one of his Meditations (XVII): Christians are always members of a community that prays and that celebrates. In a secularised world, the witness of a praying community is an open door to another world: the world of God.

It is necessary, however, to leave our temples in order to go TO MEET OUR CONTEMPORARIES and give them access to the newness of the Gospel. We have the grace of living in a time when we are confronted with the most fundamental questions: What is the human person? Are sickness and injustice inevitable? Is it necessary to believe in God in order to be happy? There are many other questions. As Christians, perhaps we do not have a response for all of them, but we know that in all situations God is present. I like very much the phrase of my compatriot, Paul Claudel: "*le Christ n'est pas venu supprimer la souffrance, ni même l'expliquer; il est venu la remplir de sa présence*" : "Christ did not come to take away suffering, nor to explain it; rather, he came to fill it with his presence". Today, more than ever, we are called to confess Jesus as the only Redeemer of man, as the one who, by his death and resurrection, radically transforms today and tomorrow, life and death. For this reason, I appreciated that, in your book, *The Sacrament of Easter*, you insisted upon the necessity of rediscovering the unique meaning of Easter. You justly showed that the Resurrection of Jesus is the only event that counts! Those who saw you at work in the communities entrusted to your care can testify that you spoke and wrote with conviction, but you were also constantly present and available for all those who needed counsel, for those who doubted themselves, for those searching for God or simply looking for meaning in their lives. Through these personal encounters that occupied much of your time, persons left comforted for having been looked upon, understood and better equipped for the great battle in life, about which the Book of Revelation speaks: the struggle between light and darkness, this permanent confrontation between a God who comes to meet men and women and a society that organises itself without God when it is not against him.

Finally, your PASSION FOR THE UNITY OF CHRISTIANS. The presence here of so many Roman Catholics – not to speak of this Cardinal – speaks eloquently about the intensity and constancy of your commitment to ecumenism. Your studies at Louvain, your long sojourn in France, your participation in various international ecumenical conferences and bodies, all these confirm your vocation as a man of frontiers and of dialogue. You belong to the great "catholic" tradition of the Anglican Communion. This allowed your Church to be on the front lines of the ecumenical movement. Through your knowledge of history (your first subject, if I am not wrong), through your association with the Roman Catholic Church, you were, and you

remain, a fruit of the *"via media"*, the "middle way", so dear to John Henry Newman. Much progress has been realised on the up-hill road towards Christian unity, to which you have personally contributed. But so many old and new difficulties slow our progress. Nevertheless, we cannot stop in mid-stream. Jesus wants us to be one. I cannot in the framework of this sermon enter into detail on the current state of the ecumenical movement. However, I would like simply to share a personal conviction with you: in front of the divisions and internal difficulties of our Churches, we must ask ourselves only one question: Is my Church a Gospel Church? The answer to that question is up to us.

We must always remember the prophecy of Zacharias (2, 5-15) who in God's name invited the inhabitants of Jerusalem to transform their city into an "open city" with God at its centre. God who will assure its security like a "fire wall". This is an appeal for our Churches: let us avoid transforming them into towers closed in upon themselves only preoccupied by their own problems. Let us make them "open Churches" sure of God's presence, the fire-wall that purifies all that is called to be purified.

There is one thing that is certain, however: the divided and violent world that we have built for ourselves has never had more need for united and consistent Christians, artisans of reconciliation. We Christians can contribute to changing the world. A celebration such as the one this evening tells us that there is no reason to be discouraged; rather, there is reason to continue our journey, hand in hand, so that the world may believe and have reason to hope.

* * * * *

Yes, may Christ, the True Shepherd, be blessed: Christ, whose love is revealed in the lives, words and actions of his servants!

May the Christ of Easter morning be blessed: Christ who tells us that we have a future!

May the Christ of the Last Supper be blessed: Christ who wants to unite us around the table of his kingdom!

Today and tomorrow, as in the last fifty years for Roger, we have the obligation to enlighten the way and life of the men and women of the third millennium with the revelation of God in Jesus Christ:

- What will become of the human race if it is reduced solely to an object of profit or biological experimentation?

- What will become of the family if human love does not find in Christ the fount of its truth?

- What will technological progress bring if it is not inspired by the transcendence of the human person created in the image and likeness of God?

- What kind of climate will reign in our societies if the relations and organisations of social life are not based on a respect for persons considered as brothers and sisters on account of Jesus, who taught us to pray to God as "our Father"?

Yes, let us pray that we may always be given more faith and love to witness with joy and courage to the Light and Power we receive from Christ.

Finally, let us pray for our friend Roger Greenacre: may he be for each one us, and for many more years to come, the attentive and fraternal companion on the journey, the companion whom we have come to know and to love, until that day when, all together, we will hear knocking on the door of the Church, finally united: "*If any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and eat with him, and he with me*" (Rev 3:20). Our assembly this evening, united in praise of Saint Michael and all the Angels, is a foreshadowing of that blessed day. There is, then, only one thing left to say: "*Thus may it be! Come, Lord Jesus*" (Rev 22:20). Amen !