

The Archbishop of York is saying farewell to the Bishop of Sodor and Man, Peter Eagles, who is due



Diocese of Sodor and Man

We say farewell today to our dear brother Peter Eagles, the Bishop of Sodor and Man. Peter can't be with us in the chamber but I believe he is watching on Zoom.

Sodor and Man is the smallest diocese in the Church of England. In case you don't know the word sodor it comes from what was the Hebridean Islands that were part of the diocese when it was part of the Norwegian church.

It is the smallest diocese in the Church of England, but it has one of the biggest hearts, and its bishop, Peter, who retires later this year, is as we know a modest, godly, prayerful, big-hearted bishop.

I recently, visited the island – my flight was cancelled because of dense fog, so I got the true Manx experience. I couldn't get on the island, and when I did get there, I saw very little. But I did see Bishop Peter at work, and I saw a bishop who loves his people and serves them, and is deeply committed to his diocese.

But although the diocese is small, many of the tasks and responsibilities of running a diocese are the same whether you have 15 parishes or 550 and for Peter there is no one to stand in. But of course he has never complained, because what Peter personifies and embodies is a spirit of loving service and duty, and of course this comes from where he has spent most of his ministry, which is in the Royal Army Chaplains' Department. He spent ten years as a Regimental Chaplain to numerous infantry battalions, ten years serving as a Divisional Senior Chaplain, five years in Army Headquarters and in 2011, became the Archdeacon for the Army, which is the most senior Anglican chaplain in the British Army, before his final appointment as Deputy Chaplain General, the second most senior post. During that time, he completed challenging operational tours. Northern Island, Helmand Province in Afghanistan, Kosovo and Iraq. An army chaplain provides a lifeline of hope in dark times and it was in these situations that Peter's pastoral grace was formed and forged. No doubt he has many stories to tell. Often harrowing stories that can only be told to God in great lament.

The Isle of Man is also a self-governing British Crown Dependency. It is home to Tynwald, 'the world's oldest continuous parliament', and the bishop is part of that, where Peter's contributions have been hugely valued. There was a motion in the Tynwald just a couple of weeks ago for the bishop to be removed. It was roundly defeated and this more than anything demonstrates the value of Peter's ministry in that place.

Peter is also a gifted linguist and went to Manx lessons, so that he could lead public prayer in the Isle of Man's native tongue. His knowledge of Russian has made his reflections on the war in Ukraine particularly hopeful.

On my travels with Peter around the diocese before Easter, I discovered his love of Russian poetry and the little side-line he has in translating Russian poetry into English.

Most of all Peter is a man of prayer. A man who is always putting out into the deep waters. Rooted in the Catholic faith of the Church of England, but relating across the traditions.

In the national church he has led on deliverance ministry with our relationship with the old Catholics, with the Church Lads' and Church Girls' Brigade.

And thank you to Gail, who has been such a constant support and a wonderfully hospitable host.

Peter as you prepare for retirement and move, I think, to Walsingham, where your devotion to the Mother of God and to the truth of the incarnation will I'm sure open new doors of opportunity, you go with the gratitude and affection of a church you have served so well. As a pastor, a padre, a priest and a bishop. Peter thank you.

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