

Marcus Stock Appointed Bishop of Leeds

Pope Francis has appointed Mgr Marcus Stock Bishop-elect of Leeds diocese. Mgr Marcus is a proven



administrator having been General Secretary of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales (November 2009 to date) and Acting Director of the Catholic Education Service (November 2011 to April 2013). He is widely considered orthodox and excellent. I know him mostly from his work Christ at the Centre (which ironically is only available online from the National Secularist Society website here).

If you want to know a bit more about Bishop Elect Stock's theology and vision, you could do a lot worse than read this document. I personally don't think it is the best thing out there, but it is certainly among the best, and holds an authentic theology and vision for Catholic education.

One of the things about Mgr Stock is that he has long been in the running for episcopacy, indeed, I was wondering whether he wouldn't be given Brentwood. I considered that would have been a very good thing for us, but I am extremely happy with who we eventually got. Whilst considering the possibility of Bishop Marcus of Brentwood, what I heard was that he was a steely administrator, and just the man to straighten things out, whilst also being very intelligent and committed to Christ and His Church (Deo gratias!). Catholic, shrewd, organised, all words that are commonly used to describe Mgr. Stock. For further proof of his Catholic credentials, you might remember this from January last year.

The CCEW website has the following report:

Pope Francis has appointed Monsignor Marcus Stock, currently the general secretary of the Bishops' Conference, as Bishop of Leeds.

He will be the 10th Bishop of Leeds. Mgr John Wilson has been diocesan administrator since former Bishop of Leeds, Archbishop Arthur Roche, left for Rome in 2012 to take up the position of secretary of the Congregation for the Divine Worship and the Sacraments in the Curia of the Holy See.

Bishop-elect Stock was ordained priest in 1988 and served as parish priest across the Birmingham

Archdiocese, most recently at the parish of the Sacred Heart and St Theresa in Coleshill. He also served as director of the Diocesan Schools' Commission and since 2009 he has been general secretary of the Bishops' Conference.

Mgr Marcus Stock, Bishop-elect of Leeds, said:

"I am overwhelmed at the trust which the Holy Father has placed in me.

"I have written to the Holy Father and assured him, as the Successor of St Peter and Supreme Pontiff of the Catholic Church, of my loyal and filial love, and of my intention to give myself entirely to the service of the Diocese of Leeds.

"I am only too conscious of my weaknesses and sinfulness. It is therefore with humility and the desire to obey the call to serve, in whatever way the Church asks of me, that I have accepted this appointment. Before all else therefore, I ask for your prayers for me. Throughout my ministry as a priest, I have been sustained in grace by the prayers of the parishioners and religious that I have been privileged to serve and by the prayers of my brother clergy in the Archdiocese of Birmingham. This is the first thing for which I hope; to be assured of your prayers. And from now on, I assure you, for my part you will be in the first thoughts of my prayers each day.

"The second thing for which I hope is to be able to express as strongly as I can, my thanks. Thanks to my predecessors, Archbishop Arthur Roche and Bishop David Konstant, on whose firm legacy I can only hope to build; and, my thanks to Mgr. John Wilson, the Chapter of Canons and all the clergy and lay people who have given untiring and generous service in leading and caring for the Diocese of Leeds over the past two years. I know that I will need to listen carefully to their wise counsel and advice both before and after my ordination as bishop.

"The third thing for which I hope is for your patience and support. I am sure that my name will be quite unknown to the vast majority of the clergy, religious and lay people of the diocese. Consequently, I hope that you will be patient with me as I get to know the clergy, religious, parishes, schools and the whole area of the Diocese of Leeds. I pray too, that you will support me not only by your prayers but also by your collaboration in the important work of evangelisation, to which all those who have received the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation are called; and, in making known to all those people who touch our lives, the infinite mercy of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

"When I was informed of my appointment, I was given a list of tasks that require fairly quick decisions from me. Among these, was the need to choose a motto for my life as a bishop. However, I needed no time to ponder on this. Many years ago in Rome, on the day of my ordination as a deacon, and just before I made my solemn ordination promises, the late Cardinal Basil Hume said to me, 'Let the words of Our Lord ring in your ears, 'I have longed and longed to be with you'. Carry these words not only throughout your diaconate but into your priesthood; then, you will discover that peace, that joy, in the service of the servants of the Lord.'

"Since then, those words have been imprinted deep upon my heart. *Desiderio desideravi*, 'I have longed and longed to be with you', or 'I have desired with desire to be with you', the words as written in St Luke's Gospel (22:15) which Our Lord spoke to his apostles as he sat down with them at the Last Supper.

"During his homily, Cardinal Hume had used those words to express the great desire and intimacy with which Our Lord wishes to share His divine life and love with each one of us. That life and love is offered freely to all men and women. If in faith we accept that life and love, we have no need to be afraid, we can bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, and endure all things. It is that message which I have tried to make central to my ministry as a priest and which I hope and pray will continue to be at the centre of my new ministry as a bishop. So, *Desiderio desideravi* will be my motto.

“Looking ahead, I place all my trust in the love and infinite mercy of Our Lord Jesus Christ and in the powerful intercession of His Blessed Mother, Our Lady of Unfailing Help.

“Please pray for me as I prepare for my episcopal ordination and be assured of my prayers for you.”

Cardinal Nichols said:

“For the last five years I have been constantly grateful to the Archdiocese of Birmingham for releasing Mgr Marcus Stock to be the General Secretary of the Bishops' Conference. As he is now appointed to be the next Bishop of Leeds, I express my warmest thanks to Mgr Stock for the great work he has done here in London on behalf of us bishops and the Church.

“The Diocese of Leeds is receiving a fine man as its new bishop. He will bring his many abilities to his new calling. They are well known and widely appreciated. Most importantly of all, he brings his deep love of the Lord and His Church, the true source of his dedication, sensitivity, generosity and stability. “I welcome wholeheartedly this decision of Pope Francis and I assure Mgr Marcus of my full support and prayers as he prepares for this next step in his vocation of service in the Church.”

Archbishop Bernard Longley said:

“I offer my heartfelt congratulations to Mgr Marcus Stock as the news of his nomination by the Holy Father as the Bishop of Leeds is announced. This will be a wonderful blessing to the Diocese of Leeds and to the Church in England and Wales and I am grateful that Mgr Marcus takes with him his experience as a priest of our own archdiocese for twenty-six years. His pastoral work in six parishes, his leadership of the Diocesan Education Service and his more recent work as General Secretary of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales will be a sure foundation for his new ministry in Leeds. We shall miss Mgr Marcus greatly among the presbyterate of the Archdiocese and I am aware that he too will miss the fraternal bonds with his brother priests that have sustained and supported him over these last twenty-six years.

“I know that you will pray for Mgr Marcus as he prepares for his episcopal ordination. He has asked me to assure you that he will pray for everybody in the Archdiocese of Birmingham with gratitude for our friendship and with abiding affection.”

The date of Bishop-elect Stock's Episcopal Ordination will be announced shortly.

Diocese of Leeds

The Diocese of Leeds consists of the County of West Yorkshire and parts of North Yorkshire, parts of East Riding, Cumbria, Greater Manchester and Lancashire. It is within the Ecclesiastical Province of Liverpool.

Reporters