

Worcester Diocesan Synod November 2022

The phraseology of the Prayer Book comes to mind as I address you today:

*O God,
who knowest us to be set
in the midst of so many and great dangers.*

There are many dangers around, so much to concern us: the climate emergency, in the news because of COP27, which we are told is unlikely to end in anything but catastrophe; then there's the appalling war in Ukraine, with the threat of it turning nuclear always on the background; There's the chaos we have seen in Government and, finally, not unrelated to the previous two and very much in our minds, the cost of living crisis.

I was at the Worcester food bank recently and was told that demand has increased and is increasing exponentially: two weeks ago they were feeding 1000 people a week. The statistics are alarming. So many families and particularly children are suffering. A new report by the think tank *Theos* published today makes clear how dire the situation is. That's why I am so grateful that Annette Daly, CEO of YMCA Worcestershire, of which I am privileged to be President, is with us this evening. YMCA is doing wonderful work on behalf of us all.

On Thursday I shall be travelling to our link Diocese of Peru to visit our Christian sisters and brothers. The scale of the problems facing them are colossal in comparison with ours. The work of the Church among the poorest of the poor – and this is absolute rather than relative poverty – is extraordinarily inspiring.

I am always moved when I go there – and to Morogoro – by the vision and energy, faith and commitment of the Church, both in proclaiming the Christian faith and serving the poor. It's amazing.

They bring home to me how the various parts of our agenda this evening are inextricably and intimately linked. We need to respond to the cost-of-living crisis by assisting whenever we can – and giving thanks if we are not as affected as some. We need to plan, under God, how we can best use the resources at our disposal to reach as many people as possible not just with material help but with the good news of God's love for them in Jesus. That is what our diocesan overview planning us about, as is the resource 'Everyday Faith'.

Maybe the biggest danger faces by our contemporaries is a lack of hope. We have a hope to offer which lies beyond the here and now and stretches out into eternity. What is before you this evening is a robust plan and coherent strategic vision for the future, to share that hope which I hope you will welcome enthusiastically.

I'm not going to say any more now, not simply because brevity is surely next to godliness, but also because I want to leave as much time as I can to Annette.

Thank you.

Bishop John.