

## **BISHOP DAVID OAKLEY**

On Wednesday, 24th June, our Diocese issued the following statement:

“The Diocese of Northampton can confirm that Bishop David Oakley has been charged after an investigation into non-recent safeguarding allegations.

“We understand that this will be very distressing for all concerned but cannot comment further on an active legal process.”

The following day, this statement was published by the Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales:

“Yesterday’s news of the charges brought against Bishop David Oakley is deeply distressing for all, both within the Catholic community and beyond.

“We are profoundly aware that the report of this allegation may reawaken painful memories for many people and again offer an unreserved apology to those who have been hurt by abuse in the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

“In this moment we would like to provide pastoral reassurance on the commitment of the Church to safeguarding.

“The Catholic Church in England and Wales maintains a zero-tolerance policy for abuse in the Church and in wider society, and we are cooperating fully with the statutory authorities.

“Our immediate focus is on providing pastoral support and ensuring that we, as the Church, can continue our mission safely and transparently.

“Anybody who comes to our parishes, schools and communities must be safe and we are resolute in our commitment to safeguarding.

“We reiterate the open invitation from the bishops to meet with and listen to victims and survivors, so that we can learn from and be guided by their experiences as we continue to make our communities safe places.

“We are committed to continual review and development, assisted by the independent auditing work of the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency, so that all our communities are places of safety and sanctuary for all.”

On Tuesday of this week it was announced that Pope Leo has appointed Archbishop Richard Moth of Westminster as Apostolic Administrator of our Diocese of Northampton, as a temporary measure.

This role is enacted in a diocese to ensure that its pastoral governance continues when it is not possible for a diocesan Bishop to exercise his office. Therefore, the governance of the Diocese of Northampton is now canonically entrusted to Archbishop Moth. Bishop David is still the Bishop of Northampton.

## **THE BISHOP’S NAME IN THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER**

It is entirely understandable that the current accusations against our Bishop cause pain, confusion, and even anger. It is natural to ask why the Bishop's name continues to be included in the Eucharistic Prayer at Mass during this time.

There are two important reasons—one pastoral, and one canonical—why we keep his name in our prayers.

**Canon Law and Communion:** In the Catholic Church, mentioning the local bishop’s name in the Eucharistic Prayer is not a personal endorsement of his character or a statement on his innocence or guilt. Rather, it is a structural reality. Canon law dictates that a bishop remains the visible head of the local diocese until a canonical process or the Holy See modifies that status. Including his name signifies that our parish remains in active, institutional communion with the wider Catholic Church.

**The Pastoral Purpose of Prayer:** As Christians, prayer is never a reward for good behaviour; it is our primary response to brokenness. Praying for the Bishop by name does not minimize the seriousness of the allegations, nor does it ignore the pain of any who have been harmed. We pray that truth comes to light, justice is served, and that all involved are guided by the Holy Spirit to act with absolute integrity.

By continuing to pray for our shepherd—even in a time of deep crisis—we are not choosing sides. We are placing the entire situation, the legal process, and all those affected into the hands of God, who alone is the perfect judge.