

## **“CHURCH IS LEAST ATTRACTIVE WHEN TALKING ABOUT ITSELF” - BISHOP NICHOLAS**

“St Paul’s Cathedral lacked the instinct to respond to the great opportunity of a crisis” the new Bishop of Salisbury, Nicholas Holtam, declared at his first Diocesan Synod at Market Lavington.

Focusing on the recent anti-capitalist protests outside St Paul’s Cathedral, Bishop Nicholas continued: “During the past weeks St Paul’s has become the story - not the City, the economy of God. The Church is well placed to host and contribute to the debate. The disaster was for St Paul’s to close the doors on the camp and on their regular visitors who, oddly enough, became more prayerful on the steps than they often seem when having to pay to go inside.

“Threatening to evict the protesters showed the cathedral as willing to use the power of the City of London to protect itself, which is the very thing that worries the rest of us. The Church is at its best when attentive to God and one another in love and service rather than worrying about our own survival. However, the Church is least attractive when talking about itself.

“Whilst it is not clear from the New Testament whether the Church is of, with or for the poor, the Church isn’t credible if we don’t attempt something along one of those lines. St Paul’s seems not to have asked themselves that root question. The terrible cost is of two able and likeable priests resigning in circumstances that have damaged them and us, for we are a single body.”

The Bishop then turned his attention to the Children and Young People Strategy for the Diocese, now in its final stage of preparation. “It is intentionally placing children and young people at the heart of what we do” he said. So I hope that this strategy will be the first of a series of documents that give shared purpose and coherence to our common life in Christ and help us to pull together in the same direction.”

Of the forthcoming Olympic Games he observed: “What are the opportunities in our country’s hosting of this international gathering, the world’s greatest sporting event; and what will be its legacy for the communities in which we live and serve? This is not about a 100 metre sprint next summer but about the opportunities of the preparations and the legacy in a time of serious economic turmoil.”