

# Obituary: Bishop Christopher Budd - Diocese of Plymouth

*Caitlin Miller*

Hugh Christopher Budd was born in Romford on the 27<sup>th</sup> May 1937 to John and Phyllis Mary Budd. He was one of six children of whom his sister Jean is his only surviving sibling. The relationship with his siblings was of great importance to him and this closeness continued even when the circumstances of his own training and post ordination responsibilities meant the family were not physically near to each other.

Having begun his education at Hornchurch and moving to the Salesian College at Chertsey in 1949 he then moved to Cotton College a junior seminary in 1953, moving on to St Thomas's Seminary, Grove Park before moving finally to complete his studies at the Venerable English and Welsh College in 1956. Here he remained until his ordination in the Church of Our Lady of the Snows at Palazzola on the 8<sup>th</sup> July 1962.

After further studies to become a Doctor of Theology, he remained in post at the College as the tutor in Theology until 1971 during the massive changes which were happening in the Church and which, as a seminary professor, he was hugely important in enabling to become a part of the priests formation at that time. From here he returned to England, not to parish life but to the role of Theology Lecturer at Newman College until 1976 at which time he was appointed as Head of Training for the Catholic Marriage Advisory Council, a role he continued until his appointment as Rector of St John's Seminary, Womersley in 1979.

This important role in the formation of men (who are now leading members of the Church both as clergy and laymen) he fulfilled with great integrity and understanding for 6 years. Finally, after so many years of working outside of parishes but helping others to work within them, it seemed like he might now be able to enjoy a more pastoral life as he was appointed as Administrator of Brentwood Cathedral, his home diocese in 1985 but, after a few short months, this was brought to an end when he was called by Pope John Paul II to become the eighth bishop of Plymouth succeeding Bishop Cyril Restieaux who had himself carried the crozier for many years previously.

Little did Bishop Christopher know that he was to be the Bishop of this very sprawling, rural diocese for some 28 years. In that time he proved himself to be a man of great compassion and understanding, one who sought to involve himself in the life of this very unique corner of the United Kingdom. His work with his fellow Christians can never be underestimated, forging links and relationships, which have stood the test of time. As recognition of this, the Anglican Diocese of Truro invited him to take up a chair as an honorary canon, which he was very happy to accept. It reinforced the vision he held of a Church bearing witness to the truth of the Gospel by working and

praying together wherever it was possible without compromising the integrity of any of those involved.

This strong sense of empathy and integrity stood him in great stead in the many areas of the wider Church and world in which he was called to minister. He was a member of the Department for Social Justice of the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales and, between 2002 and 2010, a Director of the Catholic Agency for Social Concern, now a part of Caritas. He was also, for many years, the Chairman of the Catholic Bishops Joint Committee on Bio- Ethical issues for the whole of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.

In his long and sincere ministry to the people of the Plymouth Diocese he had to steer through waters that were new and uncharted. The falling number of priests, dwindling congregations, the international clerical abuse scandal, all these Bishop Christopher had to encounter, as did all bishops of any diocese anywhere in the western world. These he faced with honesty and a genuine humility. He sought to inspire and enable his people and his clergy through opportunities to meet and reflect together. The RCIA summer school in 1991 was a highlight of liturgy, reflection and learning which had a profound effect on parishes across the three counties and still does today. The Diocesan Assembly in 2004, though not of the same level of overall effect, gave people a real sense of being listened to and heard.

His involvement in Pilgrimage with his people took him to Taize, Lourdes, Landevennac, Oberammergau and Fulda in mainland Europe as well as journeying to the Holy Land. These pilgrimages often continued his ecumenical spirit and were signs of this commitment. His visiting of the diocesan priests working abroad most especially in Kenya but elsewhere in the world reinforced that sense of the universality of the Church. And his special concern for the poor informed his mission and ministry and from this developed a draft mission statement and covenant with the poor.

Bishop Christopher was, and continued to be into his retirement, a man of genuine goodness. A kind man, a man of gentle humour and humble gratitude for whatever he received. His priests did not dread his visitations as perhaps some priests in other diocese and in other times may have done. His desire was always to encourage and enable. He knew his priests and sought to be a father and, as much as a bishop can be, a friend. He loved his people and they, in so many ways, reciprocated the sentiment.

When, after 2 years beyond his retirement age, he was finally able to lay down his crozier he stepped into retirement. He chose to retire on the 9<sup>th</sup> of October 2013, the Feast Day of St John Henry Newman. He then began to enjoy the quiet pastoral life that he had never been free to enjoy throughout his long and varied ministries spent enabling others to minister in the very places he was not free to. He was always ready to supply for priests in their parishes to enable them, that word again, to find time for relaxation and recuperation. He lived in peaceful retirement in the winter on St Mary's in the Scillies or in the spring and summer at the Catholic Church In Lyme

Regis. It was only in the last year that he withdrew from the winter residence when his health began to become more of an issue. His patience with the various treatments he underwent as he struggled with his cancer was an inspiration in itself. His lack of self pity, his good humour and humility to the last was a blessing to all those who cared for and loved him.

He will be greatly missed by so many, he was a true example of genuine faith, genuine hope and genuine love. He died in the early hours of Saturday April 1<sup>st</sup> aged 85. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

By Fr Mark Skelton