DIRECTIVE ON A EULOGY AT THE FUNERAL MASS

October 13, 1998

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

With my enthusiastic support, Sister Loretta Manzara — our Diocesan Director of Liturgy — is forwarding to you two pamphlets on funeral practices which were produced by the National Liturgy Office of the Canadian Bishops. One of these deals with Catholics and Cremation, the other deals with Catholic Funerals and Eulogies, The Pall and The Flag. The recommendations of these informative leaflets have my total and unconditional support.

In particular, the comments on Eulogies are very important since it is an issue which frequently arises in parish ministry and becomes a source of irritation to both priests and, not infrequently, to families who are denied what they think is a customary tribute to their deceased family member.

It is important that people have the opportunity to tell the story of the deceased and the place where that can best be done is at the Vigil Service held the night before the funeral. The references to that practice included in this leaflet are a very valuable contribution to pastoral praxis.

The homily at the Funeral Liturgy should enable the people to enter fully into the mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus, seeing in it the paradigm and the source of hope for their own dearly beloved deceased. Above all, when we are dealing with people whose faith has been vibrant, whose practice of the faith has been devoted or who have been reconciled with the Church in their dying days, it is important to preach the Catholic faith in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. This is the promise of Our Lord. He did not come to promise us a vague after-life but to enable us to share with Him resurrection of the body and the fullness of eternal life.

It is my hope and prayer that these leaflets will contribute substantially to your devoted and loving service to the dying and to the bereaved.

Gratefully in Christ,

Most Rev. John Michael Sherlock
Bishop of London