

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

In the January 2006 issue of the *Journal* the edited text of the late Philip Barrett's study of Cathedral Visitations included a valuable exposition of the way in which such General Visitations by Diocesan Bishops have steadily evolved since medieval times.

In the course of a long episcopate I held two Visitations of Rochester Cathedral at an interval of twenty years. In 1964 I was not only anxious to review the day to day life and ministry of the Dean and Chapter but also to assess the strength of the relationship of the Cathedral to the parishes in the second oldest diocese in England, as well as the extent and the effectiveness of its link with public bodies in the city and county.

In 1984 I was concerned to discern how far the Cathedral was meeting the needs of the developing ecumenical situation, as well as the needs of the parishes in what was now a synodically governed Church. My extension of the traditional procedures of an Episcopal visitation was intended to strengthen the role of the Cathedral as the Mother Church of the diocese and to convince those involved in local government, education, HM Forces and industry, that the Cathedral was more than a historic monument on the tourist trail.

I believe that in the last quarter of a century the importance of cathedrals as mission outposts on the frontiers of society now comes to be more widely acknowledged, as is their place in dioceses where leadership has come to be from the laity as well as from the bishop and clergy. The evolution of Cathedral Visitations thus continues in the twenty-first century.

I ended my Second Cathedral Visitation Charge by saying, as some thought boldly and others rashly, that 'I wish to put down a marker, so that it is on record at this Visitation in 1984, that I expect my successors in the second century of synodical government, if not before, to preside over a Synod that is concerned with the ministry, mission and money of the Cathedral as well as of the parishes'.

Yours faithfully,

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