



**PASTORAL LETTER FOR THE ANNUAL APPEAL FOR CATHOLIC CARE
FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT, 9TH/10TH MARCH 2024**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On this Fourth Sunday in Lent, I am sending this Pastoral Letter to you to make the Annual Appeal for Catholic Care, the charitable agency of this diocese which gives concrete expression to the Church's work of *caritas*. *Caritas* means charity, a charity that is rooted in the loving kindness of God for the poor. It is why Catholic Care is designated also as Caritas Leeds, the social action agency of the Diocese of Leeds.

Charity must be at the heart of Church's life because it is the visible expression of the *caritas*, the loving kindness, which is at the heart of Godⁱ. Our charity to others is of the utmost importance because it can make every person know they are loved by God our Father, not with words but with concrete expressions of love.

It is for this reason that the witness we give to the love and mercy of God is integral to our lives as disciples of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The highest expressions of our faith and hope are our acts of loving kindness, through our works of charity, our '*caritas*'. The "*initiatives and works of service to neighbour*" and the different forms of practical charity that we undertake individually and collectively are all "*an expression of the Christian life and sharing in the mission of the Church.*"ⁱⁱ

But 'love needs to be organised if it is to be an ordered service to the community'ⁱⁱⁱ and Catholic Care was formed to do this and respond to the social challenges of the day. Established in 1863, Catholic Care began by caring for children who had been left abandoned following the death of their parents due to poor housing conditions and a high prevalence of disease.

During its 160-year history, Catholic Care has evolved to meet the different needs which have emerged across the Diocese, caring for people who are disadvantaged, vulnerable or marginalised.

The charitable objectives of Catholic Care are: "*To promote within the Catholic Diocese of Leeds the relief of poverty and distress among children and all those who through economic or family circumstances or physical or mental affliction are in need of such relief*" and, "*To promote and organise co-operation among Catholics and others in the achievement of [that goal].*"

Today, Catholic Care supports a vast number of people across the Diocese of Leeds, whatever their age or religious beliefs. Care and support are given to those with learning disabilities, to those suffering problems with their mental health, to children who are abandoned into our society's current care system, to vulnerable mothers and their babies, to older people to help them live independently in their homes, and to an array of other important care services. Dear to the heart of many parents in our diocese, is the service which Catholic Care provides to our schools by supporting our children, young people, their families, and the whole school community both day to day and in times of crisis.

I know I am making this appeal amid the throes of an ongoing cost of living crisis that has gripped our nation and created economic anxiety for many people across our diocese. Times are tough for everyone but when times are tough, the needs of those who are poor and their need for our help, increases. This appeal is an opportunity for our diocesan community to come together as one family and help those who are less fortunate.

Every Lenten season is a journey to renew our faith, hope, and love for Jesus Christ. But Lent is not only a sacred time for personal conversion and renewal through penance and prayer, it is also an opportunity to give alms and witness to who we are: the People of God, called to be agents of the love and justice which springs from God's own loving kindness and mercy.

This diocese has been blessed over many years by the immense generosity of parishioners, clergy, religious and friends. To everyone who has supported Catholic Care, and the Church's works of charity that are undertaken in parishes throughout our diocese, I wish to express my sincere gratitude. Today, I ask all the members of our diocesan family to be generous again in contributing to the 2024 Catholic Care Appeal. Every gift matters.

Everything we have and all that we are is a gift. When we give from what we have to help others, we acknowledge that we are not absolute owners of our possessions, but administrators of the good things which have been entrusted to us by God. And when we act freely out of loving kindness, we mirror the likeness of God in whose image we were created.

Our faith teaches us that there is more joy in giving than in receiving^{iv} and the Holy Father Pope Francis has said that "*A small amount, if given with love, never ends, but becomes a source of life and happiness.*"^v I pray that whatever you can give this Lent to support the work of Catholic Care, no matter how small or large the gift, it will become for you and for those who will benefit from your generosity, a source of life, happiness and blessing.

On this Laetare Sunday, it is the custom of our nation to celebrate Mothering Sunday. I would like, therefore, to extend to all mothers in our diocese my personal prayer and blessing.



✠ Marcus

Bishop of Leeds

Given at Leeds on 6 March 2024, and appointed to be read at celebrations of Mass, published through parish electronic distribution systems and websites, and made available to be taken away from the churches and chapels of the Diocese on the weekend of 9th and 10th March 2024.

ⁱ Luke 1:78

ⁱⁱ Intima Ecclesiae Natura, Art. 4 §2 Motu Proprio of Pope Benedict XVI, 2012

ⁱⁱⁱ Deus Caritas Est §20, Encyclical Letter of Pope Benedict XVI, 2005

^{iv} Acts 20:35

^v Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for Lent, 2021