



**PASTORAL LETTER FOR THE SOLEMNITY OF CHRIST THE KING
'PRAYER AND PREPARATION FOR THE JUBILEE YEAR OF 2025'**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Next Sunday, the First Sunday of Advent, will mark the beginning of the liturgical year of prayer and preparation for the celebration of the Jubilee Year of 2025.

The Church's first Jubilee was proclaimed in Rome in 1300 by Pope Boniface VIII. Starting in 1475, they were scheduled to occur every 25 years. The celebration in 2025 will be the Catholic Church's first ordinary Jubilee since Pope St John Paul II presided over the Great Jubilee of the year 2000. The 2025 Jubilee will also mark the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, an Ecumenical Council of the Church which formulated the words of our creed today, proclaiming Jesus Christ to be 'true God from true God' and 'consubstantial with the Father'.

Pope Francis has explained that a Jubilee Year is "*an event of great spiritual, ecclesial, and social significance in the life of the Church*" and, in preparation for it, he has said that we should "*...devote 2024, the year preceding the Jubilee event, to a great 'symphony' of prayer. Prayer, above all else, to renew our desire to be in the presence of the Lord, to listen to him and to adore him ... Prayer as the expression of a single 'heart and soul', which then translates into solidarity and the sharing of our daily bread.*"¹

At the recent Plenary Assembly meeting of the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales here in Leeds, I related to the Bishops some of my reflections as one of their delegates at the Synod of Bishops in Rome in October. I told them of how striking the homily had been which Pope Francis had preached at the concluding Mass of the month-long Synod.

Addressing the members of the Synod, the Holy Father said, "*Dear brothers and sisters, at the conclusion of this stage of our journey, it is important to look at the 'principle and foundation' from which everything begins ever anew: by loving. Loving God with our whole life and loving our neighbour as ourselves. Not our strategies, our human calculations, the ways of the world, but love of God and neighbour: that is the heart of everything. And how do we channel this momentum of love? I would propose two verbs, two movements of the heart, on which I would like to reflect: to adore and to serve. We love God through adoration and service.*"²

He went on to say, "*We may have plenty of good ideas on how to reform the Church, but let us remember: to adore God and to love our brothers and sisters with his love, that is the great and perennial reform. To be a worshiping Church and a Church of service, washing the feet of wounded humanity, accompanying those who are frail, weak and cast aside, going out lovingly to encounter the poor.*"

These simple but profound reflections of the Holy Father, on adoration and service, remind us of what lies at the heart of the teaching of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; they provide us, as a diocesan family, with a clear focus for our year of prayer in preparation for the Jubilee of 2025.

Firstly, we will endeavour to make known more widely those times of Adoration and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament which already take place in the Cathedral and in the churches and chapels throughout our diocese, and to encourage clergy and faithful alike to make a personal commitment to participate regularly in these periods of prayer and adoration.

Secondly, in this 160th Anniversary Year of 'Catholic Care'³, I encourage clergy and faithful alike to ask how, both individually and within our parish communities, we can support the work of our diocesan Caritas agency and increase our generosity and service to people who are in need.

The key reflection chosen for the Jubilee of 2025 is the Church as 'Pilgrims of Hope'. As God's Pilgrim Church on earth, we as individuals can spread the Good News of his saving message of hope through public witness in our communities, and by pilgrimage and procession⁴. "*We must fan the flame of hope that has been given us,*"⁵ Pope Francis wrote when announcing the Jubilee Year, "*...and help everyone to gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart and far-sighted vision.*"

On this Solemnity of Christ the King, we acknowledge that all our hope is founded in the person of the Lord Jesus. To Jesus Christ our King, let us give our prayerful adoration, and in service of him, let us give food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, a welcome to the stranger, clothing for the naked, and provide what comfort we can to those who are sick and in any kind of captivity. At the end of our lives, may we too hear the King say to us, "*Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world.*"⁶

**✠ Marcus
Bishop of Leeds**

Given at Leeds on 19th November 2023, and appointed to be read at celebrations of Mass, published through parish and school electronic distribution systems and websites, and made available to be taken away from the churches and chapels of the Diocese on Saturday 25th/Sunday 26th November 2023, the Solemnity of Christ the King.

Information about the Jubilee Year 2025 can be found at: <https://www.iubilaeum2025.va/en.html> and dedicated 'Jubilee 2025' pages on our diocesan website (from the beginning of Advent) will contain information specific to our own diocese: <https://www.dioceseofleeds.org.uk>

¹ Letter from Pope Francis to the president of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, 11th February 2022

² Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis, St Peter's Basilica, 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time - Sunday, 29th October 2023

³ Catholic Care – Leeds Caritas: <https://catholic-care.org.uk/> and 'Friends of Catholic Care': <https://catholic-care.org.uk/support-us/friends-of-catholic-care/>

⁴ Cf. <https://www.dioceseofleeds.org.uk/pilgrimages/>

⁵ Letter from Pope Francis to the president of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, 11th February 2022

⁶ Gospel of St Matthew 25:34