

DIOCESE OF SALFORD



Pastoral Letter of the Right Reverend John Arnold Bishop of Salford

*To be read in all Churches on the weekend of 30th/31st December 2017,
the Feast of the Holy Family.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Following the opening of a New Year in the life of the Church on the First Sunday of Advent, we come to the eve of our calendar New Year of 2018. I hope that, wherever you may have celebrated Christmas, it was a happy experience and that we have all celebrated together its real meaning – that God loves the world so much that He sent His only Son to be our saviour. That gift and reassurance of God’s presence needs to be firmly held in our lives each day.

What do we see as we enter this New Year? There are some disturbing concerns. There seems to be more division and conflict in our world, with some nations openly threatening one another. Political and religious persecution ravage many nations. There is uncertainty for our own nation and its future with neighbouring mainland Europe. We are only beginning to recognise the extent of the damage that we are doing to our planet – our common home. Closer to home, we face the scandal of poverty in our streets, despite also the evident wealth of many. The picture certainly seems gloomy but we must rely on our “Hope in the Future” and our trust in a God who is ever-present to us and never fails in His love for us.

Around the Diocese, we are already experiencing change as a result of our consultation. I am very grateful for the generosity of so many who accept that change needs to come and that it can be embraced to produce positive results and developments. We have the wonderful and encouraging leadership of Pope Francis who, by his own way of life and teaching, reminds us of the basic truths of the Gospel and our duties and responsibilities as “missionary disciples” forming “mission parishes” to bring the Gospel to a world much in need of direction and values.

Our pastoral project “Hope in the Future” has begun well in more than half of our parishes. Other parishes will follow at the right time for them and this project will also make an impact in our schools. Many communities have reported that they were not aware of all that is already being achieved and how much is going on in our parishes. We are right to celebrate this good work and the generosity of so many people who dedicate their time and their skills. “Hope in the Future” will help us to see how we may strengthen our faith and spirituality through our prayer and liturgy and

catechesis and how we can engage in our society particularly in reaching out to the marginalised, the poor and the isolated.

During this year we will be close to two important events and I hope that many from our diocesan family will be able to participate. In August, Dublin will host "The Gospel of the family - Joy for the World" at which it is reliably believed Pope Francis will be present. The family remains a sure foundation within our Church and beyond, and the alternatives are not providing security for adults or children, often with tragic consequences. We need to give time to understanding how we strengthen family and encourage its essential place in our lives. In September, Liverpool will host the celebration "Adoremus" which will focus on the importance of the Eucharist. I would hope that our parish communities may come to value times of Eucharistic Adoration which really does have a positive impact in so many ways in our parish life. In a way it can be the simplest of prayers: We can just look at God and let God look at us.

On this feast of the Holy Family, I assure you of my prayers for all of our diocesan family as we embrace the challenges of our world. Jesus said "I am with you always" so we can certainly have "Hope in the Future". Please pray for me that I provide good leadership and pastoral care. "Stay with us, Lord, on our Journey",

Yours devotedly,

+John

Bishop of Salford