

DIOCESE OF SALFORD

Bishop John's address to Pope Francis in Greater Manchester Faith and Civic visit to The Vatican

Holy Father,

It is with deep gratitude that we are able to present ourselves to you this morning. It is a most significant moment for us. Thank you for the time you are able to be with us. We are also pleased to celebrate your recovery from your recent illness and your speedy discharge from hospital. We give thanks and pray for your good health.

We are a group of Faith Leaders, politicians and environmentalists from the industrial area of Greater Manchester, in the Northwest of England. We are well aware that Manchester was at the heart of the Industrial Revolution which, in so many ways, has been of benefit to the lives and well-being and progress of people, not only within our nation but to many people around the world. We are also keenly aware that the Industrial Revolution has also been the source of great damage to the climate and threatens irreversible damage to our common home and to our brothers and sisters, particularly in poor nations of the global south who have done least to damage the climate.

While it can rightly be said that we remained ignorant for many years of the warming of the climate due to the burning of fossil fuels, notably coal and oil, there has been clear knowledge for some seventy years that we were endangering the future of humanity itself by the reckless development of industry, relying on non-renewable energy. In some cases, we know that knowledge has been withheld by people who were more concerned with their own profit. We are also aware of the further damage done to biodiversity, through our pollution and exploitation of Nature.

Holy Father, we thank you for your leadership in alerting the world's attention to the urgent dangers of climate change and the need for ecological conversion. Following statements of your predecessors, particular Pope St John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI, your encyclical "Laudato Si" spoke not only to members of the Catholic Church but to all Christians and to all people of goodwill. It has been received and welcomed by countless millions of people, of different Faiths and none. Through your appeal, we have recognised not only the damage we have done and which we continue to afflict on our common home but also the urgent need to repair and protect the wonders of our world, with its biodiversity and the complexity of creation of which we are guardians.

In the Greater Manchester area, we are blessed to have a cosmopolitan and diverse community. That community is represented here by faith leaders from the Christian, Jewish, Moslem, Hindu and Sikh faiths, by civic leaders and environmentalists and we ask your encouragement and blessing for our commitment to work together to help all members of our diverse faiths to understand the catastrophe which faces our world and to make changes to our daily lives and routines. We cannot

leave this complex problem simply to politicians or industry. As you have so wisely said “each and every one of us has a part to play” in confronting this dilemma.

We make a commitment to:

1. Supporting the use of renewable technology and the decarbonisation of our buildings of worship
2. Use our land to help heal nature
3. Encourage our communities to engage in proactive transformational behavioural change.

Holy Father, our sincere thanks to you. We ask for your word of encouragement and your blessing.