



DIOCESE OF SALFORD

Pastoral Letter of the Right Reverend John Arnold Bishop of Salford

*To be read in all parishes on the weekend of 29th February/1st March 2020
the First Sunday of Lent*

My dear Brothers and Sisters,

About one year ago I wrote to you, in a pastoral letter to parishes and schools, about the rapidly growing crisis of Climate Change. I was very encouraged by the response from many people. During the year I have visited many of our schools and been very pleased, and often surprised, by the seriousness of the response being made. I am particularly pleased that, in the schools, the emphasis has not been on any sense of fear about the future but always on an attitude of a growing understanding of our care for creation and the awareness of our responsibility towards all our brothers and sisters on this planet.

There are those who remain sceptical about the impending damage of Climate Change and indeed others who say that questions of Environment and the care of our planet have nothing to do with the Christian Faith. However, even a cursory viewing of Scriptures and the teaching of the Church, particularly the statements of popes in the last fifty years, make it very clear that the Environment needs to be a primary concern because it connects us all in a care for creation and is a foundation for our political thinking and our social action. To ignore the well-being of planet earth is to assist the evils of our day; poverty, hunger, economic migration, human trafficking and modern slavery.

Certainly, during this last year, we have all been made aware of the impact of Climate Change. The wildfires in the Amazon, California and, more recently, Australia have been headline news. The Amazon and Australia continue to burn. There have been un-seasonal record temperatures in various parts of the world, with droughts and floods and the resultant disruption to farming. Perhaps the most alarming news comes with the statistics about the melting of the icecaps in the Antarctic and Greenland and the unprecedented heatwave in the Arctic Circle. In the United Kingdom, the recent storms have caused disruption and serious damage to property and farmland – with lasting consequences for agriculture.

We must, of course, look to our governments and industries to make policy changes and implement them with urgency. But we are all involved. This is a theme which has been much promoted in this last year – particularly in our schools where changes to daily routine now make an impact. We can certainly begin to impact on various industries and their harmful over-production by our own choices.

Pope Francis has reminded us of our common responsibility for our planet and care for our brothers and sisters in his recent Exhortation "Beloved Amazon". He reminds us again that we really do have a responsibility for each other and every gesture of care for our environment, however small, is of significance. And our prayers for our world and its health are important, too. Perhaps the Season of Lent is the right time to consider again our practical and personal response to this urgent situation.

With my blessing and good wishes

"Stay with us, Lord, on our Journey"

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ John". The plus sign is positioned above the letter 'J'.

✠ John Arnold

Bishop of Salford

Tel 0161 794 2825 Fax 0161 727 8592

bishop@dioceseofsalford.org.uk (bishop) marie.sartini@dioceseofsalford.org.uk (secretary)

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