



**PASTORAL LETTER FOR THE ANNUAL APPEAL FOR CATHOLIC CARE – CARITAS LEEDS
FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT (LAETARE SUNDAY), 29TH/30TH MARCH 2024**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

On this Laetare Sunday, originally a day when people would visit their ‘mother’ church - that is the church where they were baptised - and, for the last one hundred years, in our nation a day we have celebrated as Mothering Sunday, I extend to all mothers in our diocese my blessing and best wishes. It is a day of joyful hope and consolation amid the penitential season of Lent.

Each year during Lent, we are called to do penance and prepare ourselves through prayer, fasting and almsgiving for the celebration of the great Paschal Mystery of the suffering, death and resurrection of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Today, I am making the annual Appeal for Catholic Care and to ask you to give some of your Lenten Almsgiving to the charitable agency of our diocese which supports and cares for people in our communities who are most in need.

This Lent takes place during a Holy Year of Jubilee with the spiritual theme ‘Pilgrims of Hope’. The Holy Year includes a series of Jubilees dedicated to various causes and activities that promote hope, solidarity and positive change. Some of these special Jubilees have a clear association with the work of Catholic Care.

Earlier this month, the Jubilee of the World of Volunteering celebrated and gave thanks for the generosity of volunteers like those who give their support to Catholic Care and the many lay faithful throughout the world who step forward to be of service to the Church, to society and to their local communities. Without Catholic Care’s many dedicated volunteers, much of the work it currently undertakes in the community simply wouldn’t take place. This Lent, it is good to remember that almsgiving – charitable giving - extends beyond the donation of money; it also encompasses the time and talent we freely give in the service of our poorest brothers and sisters.

The Jubilee of People with Disabilities will raise awareness about the positive contribution that people with disabilities make to our society and foster their rightful inclusion and roles within the Church and their local communities. So too, in the services Catholic Care provides for adults with learning disabilities and mental health issues, it strives for justice and equality for those who need our care and support.

The Jubilee of Families, Children, Grandparents and the Elderly will celebrate the bonds between generations, promoting mutual support and also honouring the older members of our communities. Similarly, Catholic Care supports people across the whole continuum of life, breaking isolation and providing hope: in schools and children’s homes; through the care and support it provides to retired priests; by its provision of Extra Care for older people enabling them to live independently; and across myriad areas of work within the community.

The Jubilee of the Poor will reflect on and encourage action against poverty, as well as fostering compassion and support for those in need. Catholic Care also devotes so much of its work, particularly through its community services, to supporting those affected by poverty.

Like many charities, Catholic Care is facing some very difficult financial challenges. We hear regularly in the media about local authorities which are on the brink of bankruptcy, schools struggling financially, and grant making bodies that have reduced funds to allocate.

As so often is the case in periods of challenge, the demand for the help provided by Catholic Care is increasing and the charity has almost doubled the number of people it has cared for and supported since last year. This Lenten call to give alms is an opportunity for our diocesan community to assist Catholic Care in continuing to help those who are in most need and I ask that you please give as generously as you can to the Catholic Care Appeal.

In this Holy Year of Jubilee, our almsgiving to Catholic Care will enable us to be real 'Pilgrims of Hope', to make a sincere gesture of love and give a tangible sign of hope for those of our brothers and sisters who experience hardship.

At the end of May, Mrs Carol Hill will leave her post as Director of Catholic Care. We owe Carol many thanks for all that she has done during her leadership of the Charity. I know that she joins me in wanting to express sincere thanks to you, parishioners and clergy across the Diocese, for your immense generosity over the years, not only through your donations, but also through the giving of time and energy as supporters and volunteers.

Through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, let us pray that the Lord will continue to bless Catholic Care and all who support its work.

+ Marcus

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Bishop of Leeds

Given at Leeds on the Solemnity of St Joseph, 19th March 2025, 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 29th and 30th March 2025.

