

PASTORAL LETTER

Annual Appeal Sunday for Catholic Care, Weekend 10th /11th March 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I write to you today to make the Annual Appeal for Catholic Care, the Diocese of Leeds's own charitable agency. This Appeal takes place traditionally today on this Fourth Sunday in Lent.

The practice of Penance in the season of Lent, and each Friday in memory of the death of the Lord, is a response to Jesus' call to conversion and repentanceⁱ; to turn away from evil and seek reconciliation with God. The penance which we undertake in Lent can be expressed in many and various ways but, above all, the Church teaches us to do so through prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

This penance, in preparation for Easter Day when we celebrate the resurrection from the dead of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, is also expressed by performing additional acts of mercy and kindness. In this respect, the giving of alms has always been an important part of Lent.

For many, almsgiving can simply mean donating money to charities or some other good causes. The concept of almsgiving in the Catholic Church though, goes much deeper. It is our response to the call of the Gospel and the Church's social teaching which encourages us to reach out to people in need and to give a positive expression to our 'concern for the poor and the defence of justice and right'ⁱⁱ.

Catholic Care does just this! It reaches out to people in need and gives a positive expression to the Church's concern for those who are disadvantaged, vulnerable and marginalised across the Diocese of Leeds. It is our own Diocesan charitable agency. It cares for and supports:

- Children and young people living away from their families;
- Adults who have a learning disability and/or mental health issues who want to reach their potential despite the daily challenges they face;
- Children, young people, families and staff in our schools feeling the stress and strains in an increasingly difficult world; and,
- Retired priests living in our Diocese.

Catholic Care is also increasing its work in the community, reaching out to more people and especially those who are hard to reach. It is doing this in a number of ways:

- Through the Gianna Project, which provides material assistance and the support of someone who cares to mothers and babies in difficult circumstances;
- Through the support it gives to young carers (It is a staggering statistic that the average age of a young carer is only 12 years old);
- Through the organisation of Community Groups for older people, which offer a safe, warm place for them to get together and socialise, reducing their loneliness and isolation;
- Through the 'Stay and Play' groups, where babies and toddlers can play and their parents/carers can enjoy some peer support;
- Through the establishment of a youth club for children and young people who find it difficult to make friends and often even to communicate with others;
- Through the support it gives to women prisoners living with their babies in prison; and,
- Responding to the call of Pope Francis, through the aid it gives to asylum seekers and refugees who are perhaps the most marginalised and vulnerable group of people living in our communities.

This work in the community has no statutory funding and much of it has no grants attached to it either. Consequently, Catholic Care relies on the generosity of those who donate to it to deliver these much needed and valuable services. Your help today will enable Catholic Care to continue its mission and develop its services to help those most in need living all around us, our brothers and sisters in Christ.

We have so many demands on our charitable giving, especially as there is so much real need in our modern society. Please help Catholic Care, as our own Diocesan Caritas charitable agency, to give people hope. Your generosity here today, especially during this season of Lent, will help in putting your faith into action.

On behalf of the Diocese of Leeds, I thank the staff and volunteers of Catholic Care for the work they do among us. I hope you will be as generous as you can be in responding to this year's Annual Appeal and thank you most sincerely for your continued support.



✠ Marcus

Bishop of Leeds

Given at Leeds on the Feast of St John Bosco, 31st January 2018 and appointed to be read, and made available, in all Churches and Chapels of the Diocese on the 10th and 11th March, 2018.

ⁱ Catechism of the Catholic Church, §1438

ⁱⁱ Ibid. §1435