



# **DIOCESE OF SALFORD**

## *Pastoral Letter of the Right Reverend John Arnold Bishop of Salford*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Although only very recently arrived among you in the Diocese, I did not want to miss the opportunity of writing a short letter to you at this special time of the Church's year.

On behalf of everyone, I would like to thank Bishop Terence for all that he has achieved with you in his seventeen years as the Bishop of Salford and for his kindness and helpfulness to me during the time of transition. We wish him a happy and restful time in retirement and, as he has chosen to stay in the Diocese, we will be pleased to see him undertaking ministry at various times, in various places.

I should admit that moving from Westminster Diocese, after thirty one years, was not something that I particularly expected. However, the warmth of the welcome and the kindness shown by so many people, religious and priests of the Diocese since the announcement in September, and particularly in these recent days, has made the move so much easier and, dare I say it, rather exciting. I am looking forward to all that we can be and do together as Church.

Christmas presents us with a challenge. So many people in the cities and towns around us will be celebrating "Christmas" but will do so with no mention of Jesus and his birth. They will not be considering the very reason why we celebrate Christmas at all - the simple but profound fact that "God loved the world so much that he sent His Son to be our Saviour". You and I need to keep our celebrations firmly rooted on that truth. It is the basis and foundation of all that we can and will be as his disciples and ambassadors.

We must also be sure to remember that Christmas is a Feast of Hope. We need no reminders of the scale of conflict and injustice that remains in our world and the scandal of poverty that exists, manifestly in the developing world, but also in our own neighbourhoods and communities. So many of us have so much and all too many simply do not have enough, the basic minimum for life. The challenge of making our world a better place is our declaration of hope at Christmas.

As we celebrate our Christmas, I hope that we can remind ourselves we have so much for which to be thankful, and so much that we can do and be together as we meet the challenges of our present day.

I would be very grateful to think that we might all pray a very simple prayer together, in our homes, schools and parishes. It is a prayer that strengthens our sense of purpose and unity and determination and calls on the Lord to be with us. The prayer is simply this: "Stay with us, Lord, on our journey." I pray it every day and hope that you will join me.

Thank you all, priests, people and religious for all that you do in our parishes, schools and organisations that speaks of Christ, not only in our care for those in our communities but also to those in the wider community. I am already seeing great evidence of life and work, love and generosity. I wish you and your families and friends every blessing as we celebrate the birth of Jesus, God's promise of His presence among us and His love for us all.

Yours devotedly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "+ John".

✠ John Arnold  
Bishop of Salford

*To be read in all Churches on the weekend of  
20/21<sup>st</sup> December, 2014, the Fourth Sunday of Advent*