

RALPH
BISHOP OF HALLAM
Pastoral Letter

To be read at all Masses on the weekend of 2/3 March 2024

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

Today, I wish to speak with you about something that is important and affects us all.

When we think of parishes we naturally tend to think of people, priests, and a parish church; a building that contains memories of our lives. A sense of place is of foremost importance, but it is the community of Christ's faithful, together with a parish priest, that makes up a parish. The celebration of the Holy Eucharist is the source and summit of life in the Church, and the Mass of Sunday, an obligation in love, will always be at the heart of parish life.

To say that we live in difficult times is a gross understatement. Life today has its challenges for the world at large and for our communities. Among other things, families and individuals must cope with increases in the cost of living. This includes our parishes as they face increased running costs, maintenance costs and finding resources for both communion and mission. This, combined with the reduction in the size of our parish communities and the number of priests, now presents us with both challenges and opportunities.

The many changes and challenges of the past few years and, indeed, what is still to come, are indicators that leaving things as they are will not serve us well as the People of God or help us to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ to the wider community.

Pope Francis has set the theme of the Jubilee Year of 2025 as “Pilgrims of Hope”. In this spirit we need to fan the flame of hope for each other and look to the future with an open heart, a trusting spirit, and a vision of the future.

Today, at the end of Mass, you will be offered a copy of Diocesan Statistics that have been prepared by the Council of Priests. It will also be available on the Parish Website and emailed to those on the subscribers’ list. This information marks the beginning of a reflection and conversation in the Spirit, about how we develop the vision we need for the Church in Hallam.

It is important that we all engage with this venture prayerfully, humbly and with generosity of mind and heart and be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

I hope that your Lenten journey has begun well as you look forward to celebrating the great Feast of Easter and the Resurrection of the Lord, and that the Lord will continue to bless you as you continue on your way through Lent.

May Our Lady of Perpetual Help be our intercessor.

Yours sincerely in Christ, the Redeemer

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