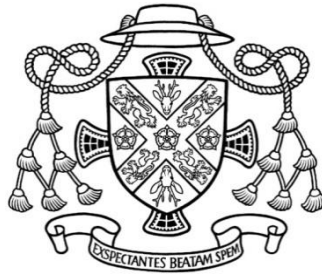


Pastoral Letter  
Of  
Terence Patrick Drainey



Bishop of Middlesbrough

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent 2024

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I am not a conspiracy theorist, nor am I pessimistic by nature, rather I'm a glass half-full person at least, and can generally see light at the end of the tunnel, no matter how faint. However, reflecting on the words of the Gospel we have just heard fills me with not a little trepidation and fear.

*'There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.'*

It carries echoes of our present age and situation, not just in our own localities and society as a whole, but worldwide. Confusion seems to reign everywhere you look and at times it feels like darkness is really closing in on us. The world appears rudderless! Where would I be without my faith in a loving and saving God!

*In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely.*

This is what our first reading at Mass reminds us; salvation and security are what we are all seeking, healing and safety. These are the things that the human race has been searching for since the dawn of time. Even in our sophisticated world, that same search continues. As Christians we look to Jesus as the bearer of all these gifts from God that we yearn for, salvation, security, healing and safety. We believe that through his death and resurrection Jesus Christ has purchased all these things for us. He is the fount of God's mercy and love for us. He offers these to each and every one of us through the sacraments and the ministry of the Church.

*All the Lord's paths are mercy and faithfulness,  
for those who keep his covenant and commands.  
(From today's psalm)*

Once in every generation the Church dramatically reminds us of our need for God's merciful love and accompanies us on the way to obtain it. That is the purpose of an Ordinary Jubilee Year. It takes place every 25 years. It is a moment in the Church's life, in our life, when we can take a pause, draw a line in the sand and drink from that fount of God's merciful love so as to be able to continue on our Pilgrimage in hope.

Pilgrimage will play a part in our own Jubilee Year celebrations in the Diocese. You can read about them in our diocesan newspaper, *The Voice*. But there will also be more local focuses of pilgrimage: the Cathedral, St Wilfrid's in York, St Peter's in Scarborough, Ampleforth Abbey, St John's Church in Beverley and the Shrine of Our Lady of Grace at Osmotherley. And the aim of all our pilgrimages will be to partake of, to accept the salvation, the security, the healing, and safety the Father offers us through Jesus.

However, once having received the merciful gifts of God, why would we want to keep them to ourselves? We in turn should become agents of mercy bringing the knowledge of the Good News to all but, more, we can bring the experience of the Good News through works of mercy and love, through the works of Charity/Caritas to all.


This Advent is a wonderful time of preparation for the coming Ordinary Jubilee Year of Hope. The Jubilee Year begins in Rome with the opening of the Holy Door of St Peter's on 24<sup>th</sup> December 2024 and will end on 28<sup>th</sup> December 2025. The Holy Year begins in the Diocese on 29<sup>th</sup> December at the Cathedral and continues until 28<sup>th</sup> December 2025.

Pope Francis' prayer for us in this coming year is summed up in his words: *May the witness of believers be for our world a leaven of authentic hope, a harbinger of new heavens and a new earth (cf. 2 Pet 3:13), where men and women will dwell in justice and harmony, in joyful expectation of the fulfilment of the Lord's promises.*

And my prayer for all in the Diocese of Middlesbrough is from our second reading today:

*May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.*

Yours in blessed hope,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lawrence Patrick".

Bishop of Middlesbrough

To be read and made available on the Weekend of 30 November/01 December 2024