

Pastoral Letter  
Of  
Terence Patrick Drainey



Bishop of Middlesbrough

Lent 2025

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

One of the great joys of being the Bishop of this Diocese is to be able to visit our students in our schools. I often say that I am able to get through the more stressful and arduous parts of the ministry if only I am able to spend time in the parish at the weekend and visit at least one school a week during term time.

After I have disappointed the students by telling them which football team I support and what type of music I like, I am often asked what my favourite piece of Scripture is. I have no hesitation in responding – Romans chapter 8 vv. 35ff. This quote has kept me going through thick and thin for most of my priestly life. It's all part of the hope that does not disappoint us in Romans 5.5

And they often ask about my personal motto, which just might have got through to you after 17 years of pastoral letters – As we wait in blessed hope from the Letter to Titus 2.13-14. This had been my motto long before I came to Middlesbrough as bishop.

There have been times in my life when plans have completely failed, when the world seems to have fallen down around me, when there appeared to be no obvious way forward. It was especially at such times that these words have been my anchor and source of sure hope, hope that does not disappoint.

Just listen to them:

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans chapter 8 vv35ff)

The grace of God has appeared, ... bringing salvation for all people, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ... (Titus chapter 2 vv13-14)

So, you can imagine that I was more than delighted to discover that the theme of our Jubilee Year is “Pilgrims of Hope”. Let me précis and quote from our Holy Father’s letter to us this Lent.

“Pilgrims of Hope”, evokes the lengthy journey of the people of Israel to the Promised Land, as recounted in the Book of Exodus. This arduous path from slavery to freedom was willed and guided by the Lord, who loves his people and remains ever faithful to them.... A first call to conversion thus comes from the realisation that all of us are pilgrims in this life; each of us is invited to stop and ask how our lives reflect this fact. Am I really on a journey, or am I standing still, not moving, either immobilised by fear and hopelessness or reluctant to move out of my comfort zone?

Christians are called to walk at the side of others, and never as lone travellers..... without shoving or stepping on others, without envy or hypocrisy, without letting anyone be left behind or excluded..... tending towards the same goal, attentive to one another in love and patience. Let us ask ourselves in the presence of the Lord whether, as bishops, priests, consecrated persons and laity in the service of the Kingdom of God, we cooperate with others. This, then, is a second call to conversion: a summons to synodality.

.... let us journey together in hope, for we have been given a promise. May the hope that does not disappoint (cf. Rom 5:5), be the focus of our Lenten journey. My hope has risen, he lives and reigns in glory. Death has been transformed into triumph, and the faith and great hope of Christians rests in this: the resurrection of Christ!

This, then, is the third call to conversion: a call to hope, to trust in God and his great promise of eternal life. Let us ask ourselves: Am I convinced that the Lord forgives my sins? Or do I act as if I can save myself? Do I long for salvation and call upon God’s help to attain it? Do I concretely experience the hope that enables me to interpret the events of history and inspires in me a commitment to justice and fraternity, to care for our common home and in such a way that no one feels excluded?

There is much to ponder here as we begin our Lenten journey in this Jubilee Year and as we wait in blessed hope.

*+ Lennox Patrick*

Bishop of Middlesbrough

To be read and made available on the First Sunday of Lent, the weekend of 8/9 March  
2025, in all Churches and Chapels of the Diocese.