



DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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Pastoral Letter

to be read at all Masses on the Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time
9/10 October 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

In today's Gospel, Jesus challenges the wealthy man who kneels before him to leave everything and follow him. The man is eager to do so but 'his face fell ... and he went away sad.' Then Peter asks the Lord: 'What about us?' When Jesus invites us to follow him, he knows the demands and challenges set before us. It is in the miracle of his presence that brings hope and life beyond the boundaries we set for ourselves and others. The Lord changes the direction in which we have let our lives grow and removes whatever hinders goodness. He heals our wounds and renews our strength. He promises us eternal life.

Peter's question: 'What about us?' has been asked in many ways during the past eighteen months of the pandemic. Despite the suffering, anxiety, and disruption, we have learned a great deal about the goodness of people in our neighbourhoods and beyond. We thank God for the selfless service of the NHS and other care workers in their support of the sick and the dying, the isolated and the lost.

Next Sunday, I will launch our Diocesan Year of the Eucharist during the 6.30pm Mass in the Cathedral. We will also begin the diocesan stage of preparation for World Synod of Bishops. Clergy and laity are invited to join me for that Mass either in person or via live stream. The Year of the Eucharist celebrates the Eucharist at the heart of the life and mission of the Church as we gather people back to Mass and the Sacraments. It will be celebrated throughout the diocese, in every church and school. I hope it will help us to grow as a Diocese in our love of the Eucharist and to deepen our appreciation of it through the liturgy. I pray that we will revitalise and renew our faith through a deepening prayer and devotion of the Eucharist, and be strengthened and nourished to go out and serve the world.

The Synod of Bishops has been called by Pope Francis who has urged us to have a vision of missionary communion focused on evangelisation. For the first time, the Synod process of 'walking together' begins in each diocese before the Bishops meet nationally, regionally and finally at the Universal Church with the final Synod Gathering of Bishops in 2023 with the Pope. More information will be circulated in due course by the Vicariate for Faith & Mission, which is coordinating both the Year of the Eucharist and the Synod process.

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