DIOCESE OF SALFORD

Pastoral Letter of the Right Reverend John Arnold Bishop of Salford

To be read and distributed on the weekend of 9th – 10th October

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

It is becoming all the more evident that the meeting of world leaders in Glasgow, for COP26, has an unprecedented urgency and importance. Scientific knowledge about the Environment has developed in recent decades so that there is now a real understanding of the damage that the human race is inflicting on our global home through climate change, and the consequences of our present way of living. What is perhaps particularly alarming is that the scientists have been accurate in estimating changing weather conditions and environmental events, but many are concerned that the deterioration is now happening even faster than had been predicted.

Care for the environment, for creation in all its complexity and abundance, is deeply rooted in our Christian Faith. We are the guardians of creation and responsible for its well-being. That aspect of our Faith is something that we have probably ignored or taken for granted, unaware of the actual damage that we are doing during this industrial age where we have developed a mistaken notion of progress and unthinkingly exploited our resources and the plant and animal life of our world, and each other.

Much is now understood about the work that can and must be done in order to begin to repair the damage inflicted by climate change. We all have our individual part to play in making changes to our own routines and our personal response will have an important impact. There are many resources available to guide us in managing – among other things - our travel, use of electricity and water, food consumption, re-cycling and waste. We must certainly not dismiss the value and importance of our individual efforts and our Christian duty to care for creation. Certainly, much is being achieved by individuals and communities.

But the real progress for change must come at an international level, with agreements and pledges made by the most powerful countries in the world. As Pope Francis insists, we must think and act globally. Our political leaders must look to making realistic and achievable policies which will ensure that global warming is limited to targets which will allow sustainable living conditions for future generations. It is essential that COP26 promotes actions that are radical enough to ensure the results that are necessary. The Paris Agreement of 2015 made the right sort of statements, but the agreed goals were never achieved.

I am writing to you today to ask that, while we must concern ourselves with our own achievable changes in our personal lifestyle, we must make determined efforts in prayer that those gathering at the COP26 meeting may understand the urgency of making those radical decisions which are required to secure a healthy environment for future generations.

I am asking that, as a family of the Diocese of Salford, we make Sunday 31st October – The Feast of All Saints - a day or prayer for the success of the meeting. There will be resources for events on that day should parishes have public gatherings. I recognise that many people still, understandably, feel cautious about attending Mass at this time. I would strongly recommend that we all pray daily for the COP26 meeting, particularly during the course of the meeting, which is 1st-12th November. CAFOD has prepared a letter which is being widely circulated and provided a prayer which is included at the end of this letter. I also offer this prayer, should you find it useful:

Loving Father,

We acknowledge that,

either through ignorance or greed,

the Earth, our common home, is damaged.

That damage is felt most by people who have done little to cause it.

Industrialisation has exploited natural resources,

endangering wildlife, causing climate change,

and resulting in disasters and global warming.

Father, forgive us, and guide us in the right way.

Send your Spirit to encourage and strengthen

our world leaders as they meet at COP26.

Cause them to discern the way that we must now go,

agreeing the changes and decisions necessary

to begin to repair the damage done

and to prepare a healthy and secure world for future generations.

And we ask Mary, our Mother, to intercede for us, and with us, in our need. Amen.

My brothers and sisters, I invite and encourage us all to place our trust in the power of prayer. Please distribute this letter to anyone that you may know who might join in praying for the successful outcome of this meeting.

“Stay with us, Lord, on our Journey”

+John Arnold

Bishop of Salford

A prayer from CAFOD:

Loving God,
We praise your name with all you have created.

You are present in the whole universe,
and in the smallest of creatures.

We acknowledge the responsibilities you have placed upon us
as stewards of your creation.

May the Holy Spirit inspire all political leaders at COP26 as they
seek to embrace the changes needed to foster a more sustainable society.
Instil in them the courage and gentleness to implement fairer solutions
for the poorest and most vulnerable,
and commit their nations to the care of Our Common Home.

We ask this through Our Lord Jesus Christ your Son.
Amen

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