

A PASTORAL LETTER FOR THE FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY & THE OPENING OF THE JUBILEE OF HOPE

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

In today's psalm, we heard;

'Blessed are the people whose strength is in you,

whose heart is set on pilgrim ways.'

On this Feast of the Holy Family, the scripture readings remind us that we are all pilgrims in life, much like Jesus' family in today's Gospel, journeying on in hope towards a deeper relationship with each other and with God.

I speak specifically of pilgrimage because, as you may be aware, Pope Francis has declared this year to be a Jubilee Year and has given it the theme of 'Pilgrims of Hope'. I will be celebrating the Solemn Opening of the Holy Year in our Diocese today at the Cathedral in Plymouth, and I'll be keeping you all in my prayers at that Mass.

During this year, the Pope asks that we look to the future 'with an open spirit, with a 'trusting heart and with far-sighted vision'. He calls us to 'recover a sense of universal fraternity', to 'refuse to turn a blind eye to the tragedy of poverty,' and to be mindful of 'those refugees forced to abandon their native lands'.

Whilst Rome is rightly the focus of Jubilee Years, the Pope has also asked every Diocese to designate certain places to be local centres of pilgrimage. During this year, we are encouraged to visit these places of pilgrimage and to spend some time in prayerful reflection there. In our Diocese, these places are the Cathedral in Plymouth, St Cuthbert Mayne Church in Launceston, the National Shrine of St Boniface in Crediton, and Holy Trinity Church in Dorchester. Pilgrim Passports will shortly be distributed to all parishes, which will give details of the pilgrim sites, and offer encouragement to you to visit them during the year if you are able. Also, each of the pilgrimage sites will have celebrations on specific significant days during the Jubilee Year which will be advertised nearer the time.

In the documents of the Second Vatican Council the Church describes herself as, 'the Pilgrim People of God', and God-willing, we all travel in hope. May this Jubilee Year be for you a time of reflection, of new insight, and of a deepening of your relationship with the Lord. May our love be a witness to those who may feel lost or hopeless, and may it encourage them on their pilgrimage to find the way, the truth and the life.

May God bless you and your family,

Paul Cummins

Diocesan Administrator

#DioceseOfPlymouth #PilgrimsOfHopePlymouth