



PASTORAL LETTER
OF THE
MOST REVEREND BERNARD LONGLEY
ARCHBISHOP OF BIRMINGHAM
FOR THE FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY
(28/29 DECEMBER 2024)

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

On this Feast of the Holy Family, I send you my prayerful greetings as we continue to celebrate the Octave of Christmas. On Christmas Eve Pope Francis opened the Holy Door at St Peter's Basilica in Rome. This was the Solemn Opening of the Jubilee Year which will continue throughout 2025. During this Holy Year we are invited to become Pilgrims of Hope.

Since the year 1300 when the people of Rome asked the Holy Father to declare a special year of jubilee, the Church has regularly offered us this opportunity – another chance to make a fresh start on our pilgrimage of faith towards Christ. The Holy Door in each of Rome's four basilicas is a sign of the welcome that the Church offers us in the name of Jesus Christ for our sins to be forgiven and our way ahead to be cleared of obstacles.

Pope Francis has called upon every diocesan bishop to celebrate the Solemn Opening of the Holy Year in his own cathedral this weekend. I shall therefore be celebrating Mass at St Chad's Cathedral and offering it for your intentions, that the Jubilee Year will bring many blessings to the life and mission of our Archdiocese. I invite all our parishes, schools, Religious communities and organisations to become pilgrims of hope throughout the coming year.

The surest way to be a faithful pilgrim of hope is to share in the mission of Jesus Christ himself. He has told us that he was anointed *to proclaim good news to the poor...to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind*. In our world there are many kinds of poverty, captivity and blindness – spiritual as well as material and physical – and this Jubilee Year invites us to share and celebrate hope with those around us who have yet to hear the good news.

In a unique gesture for this Jubilee Year Pope Francis opened a Holy Door on the day after Christmas in Rome's Rebibbia Prison. This bronze door is hidden behind the walls of the Roman prison – but it symbolises prisons throughout world.

Pope Francis wrote that "In the Jubilee Year, we are called to be signs of hope for many brothers and sisters in hardship—especially prisoners who endure both the harshness of confinement and emotional emptiness." The Holy Father's visit to a prison is a profound sign of hope for the thirteen prisons that lie within our own Archdiocese. I thank all our Prison Chaplains and volunteer visitors for their intention during the Jubilee Year to carry this message of hope through their ministry and their regular visits.

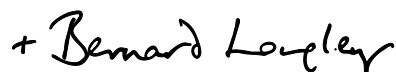
We can all find a way to push open the door of hope during this Jubilee Year – both for ourselves and for all the people we shall meet during the coming year. In order to equip us to become pilgrims of hope, do remember that there are many helpful resources for the Jubilee Year available on the diocesan website.

I hope that you will have an opportunity to visit one of our diocesan pilgrim churches in the course of this year – to pray there for all who suffer the hardships that we can help to relieve – and also to pray for the Church and the Holy Father. As pilgrims of hope we can be grateful for the *love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God*.

May the Holy Family of Nazareth help us all, this Jubilee Year, to grow closer to Christ the Prince of Peace and to serve our brothers and sisters with kindness and generosity.

With my prayers for you and your family this Christmastide.

Yours devotedly in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Bernard Longley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

✠Bernard Longley
Archbishop of Birmingham

Given at Birmingham on 21 December 2024 and appointed to be read in all Churches and Chapels of the Archdiocese on the Feast of the Holy Family, 28/29 December 2024).