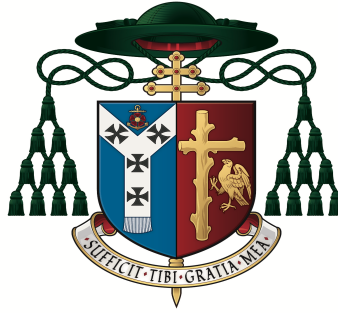




A Pastoral Letter

*to be read in all churches and chapels of the archdiocese
for the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe
22nd and 23rd November 2025*

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

'Christ is alive! He is our hope, and in a wonderful way he brings youth to our world, and everything he touches becomes young, new, full of life.' These words spoken by Pope Francis to young people can be addressed to each one of us: Christ is alive, and he wants you to be alive!

We discover this truth when we follow Jesus Christ who is the King of the Universe. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. He calls us to be stewards of creation, shows us the way to the Father, and sends the Holy Spirit to inspire us to be women and men of faith, hope, and love, who are witnesses to his kingdom. Together we are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God who are pilgrims and witnesses of hope.

The Feast of Christ the King reminds me of the wonderful liturgy of thanksgiving and welcome in the Metropolitan Cathedral which marked the beginning of my ministry as archbishop. I thank you for this welcome and your daily prayer for me as your shepherd in the archdiocese. During my visits to parishes, schools and places of outreach, I have met many committed people, priests and deacons, who are servants of Christ, the King of the Universe.

Today's feast celebrates the victory of Christ over evil, suffering and death. Christ rose from the dead and lives with us today. He offers the promise of eternal life in heaven. He offers God's gift of mercy to those who trust in him. He lives in the heart of each baptised person. He speaks to us in the scriptures and feeds us when we receive him in Holy Communion. He leads us from darkness into his wonderful light. He sends us out to be his presence in the world like leaven bringing about a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace. We are witnesses to Jesus by our love for others.

We are pilgrims of hope - the theme of the Jubilee Year. Children in our schools have thought about what this means and brought hope to others by their energy and

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enthusiasm. I thank our teachers and families who have helped them. Many people, including King Charles, have visited Rome, the city of the martyrs St Peter and St Paul, as pilgrims. This is an important sign of ecumenical witness. Christians have prayed together. The *"green shoots of God's kingdom"* are seen when people pray together; when families love one another and care for children and sick members; when people accompany the dying; as well as carry out works of justice and peace. They are also seen in an increasing number of young people who want to love, know and meet Jesus Christ.

The year which began with Pope Francis opening the Jubilee doors in Rome was marked by the shock of his death on Easter Monday and then the election of Pope Leo XIV. Pope Leo's first words of greeting were 'Peace be with all of you', reminding us that Christ is the King of Peace, a peace that only God can give. We are called to be peacebuilders in today's fragmented world.

Today we celebrate Youth Sunday. In Lourdes I witnessed the joy, enthusiasm and energy of about 400 young people, teenagers and adults, who travelled as pilgrims to serve others. Their yellow shirts brightened Lourdes and shone out as a witness of young people to their faith. They learnt about the healing of Jack Traynor. They prayed, sang, served the sick and had fun.

To our younger people, I say 'Thank you'. The Church needs you today. You are bombarded by many messages of social media, some good, some very bad. Influencers try to attract your attention and sell you 'images of the good life'. So many of these are false. There are so many confusing messages around you. One thing is constant, God loves you. He invites you to be a friend of Jesus. Jesus Christ offers you hope and a good life; please help me, as your bishop, to spread this message to other young people, young adults and families. We can learn from you and help you to find a home in the Church. You can help us navigate the digital environment and use it to spread the hope of Jesus to others and create deeper bonds of belonging, encounter and dialogue [C.f. Synod *FD* 113]. Dear young people, you are not just our future, but our NOW as essential members of our Church.

We ask the prayer of St. Carlo Acutis and Blessed Chiara Badano. Both died young from incurable illnesses. They show us how they trusted in the power of Jesus Christ the King of the Universe. St Carlo also teaches us that the Eucharist is the highway to heaven and that adoration of the Blessed Sacrament leads to greater love of the poor.

May we allow the words 'Christ is alive, and he wants you to be alive!' to echo in our hearts. Let us ask his help to be witnesses of holiness by prayer, love and service of others.

May God bless you all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Smith', preceded by a small cross symbol.

Archbishop of Liverpool