DIOCESE OF SALFORD

Pastoral Letter of the Right Reverend John Arnold Bishop of Salford

To be read at all Sunday Masses on the weekend of 14th/15th November 2026

Dear brothers and sisters,

Our Gospel today speaks to us of the "good and faithful servants" who respond to the trust which God places in them. Our priests and deacons strive to be such good and faithful servants.

Following on from our Diocesan Synod they have written a letter to the faithful of our Diocese which I am pleased to endorse and ask that it be read out at all the Sunday Masses this weekend.

This letter has been written by a group of our clergy, following on from a series of gatherings that involved over 100 of them.

With my best wishes, prayers and blessing,



+John Arnold
Bishop of Salford.

The clergy write:

At every Mass during the Eucharistic prayer we pray for our local Church, praying for our Bishop by name and also for "all the clergy, and the entire people you have gained for your own." This prayer reminds us that we are all members of the one body of Christ, each with our unique role to play.

In the Diocesan Synod, between 2023 and 2025, the topic of clergy welfare featured prominently in the "big listen" and in the preparation for the final voting day. On that day, the following recommendation received one of the highest number of votes. It read: "The Diocese of Salford Synod 2025 recommends that, building on what is already in place, care and support for priests, whether active or retired, should continue to be a priority and should be further developed in both practical and personal ways".

The concern that you, the lay faithful of the Diocese, showed in this process for the clergy was noted and very much appreciated by us, your clergy. We have a real sense that you value not just the ministries of priests and deacons but us as individuals who, despite our human weaknesses, seek to serve the portion of God's flock which is entrusted to us to the best of our abilities.

As part of the broader implementation of the synod recommendations, as clergy we have undertaken a process of listening, so that we can accurately assess our current situation and produce a plan taking this important issue of clergy welfare forward. Clergy had the opportunity to be listened to by a facilitator, and we have met to share and discern together what is going well and brings us joy in our ministry, as well as what the challenges are and what needs further work or development.

The first and most important thing to say is that, on the whole, we love being ordained, and we are inspired by our ministry with the people entrusted to us. We also appreciate the rich diversity which is now present across the body of priests serving in our Diocese. We have a strong desire to get to know each other better, especially for an increased fraternity between the priests belonging to Salford Diocese and those who come to minister in our Diocese from abroad and from other parts of our country. We want to take more responsibility for our mutual support, as well as continuing to foster our spiritual life of prayer upon which our ministry must be grounded.

In and amongst the joys of our ministry there are, however, some serious concerns which can affect our physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Out of 80 Salford Diocesan priests with a current appointment, only 34 are under the age of 60. Many priests are already running several churches and there is a real sense of some priests being overwhelmed with increasing work and less help.

This is exacerbated in some places by modern "consumerist" demands and an increased culture of complaints. There are also some priests who feel isolated and lonely, or who feel like they don't know where to turn for the support that they need.

As a group of deacons and priests in the Diocese, we now wish to create a culture where we are all known and supported as individuals and where we can use our gifts and talents to further aid the mission of the Church. We have thus produced a plan for care of the clergy which we will be implementing over the coming years. The commitments in our plan fall into three categories: fraternity; supporting and caring; and growth and development. Our first priorities in the coming months will be the creation of the team who will coordinate these activities, a focus on developing priestly fraternity both within deanery structures and more broadly, relaunching the junior clergy programme, and working on a planned approach to retirement.

We cannot do this without your help and support; please consider how you can support the physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing of your priests and deacons. Whether it be prayer, voluntary work in the parish, or using your professional skills, we invite you to continue placing an importance on the welfare of your clergy just as you did when you placed it as a high priority in the synod.

We commend ourselves to the intercession of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St Joseph so that we may serve you and each other well in this Diocese of Salford. May God bless you all. Amen.

Tel: 0161 794 2825
bishop@dioceseof salford.org.uk (bishop) marie.sartini@dioceseofsalford.org.uk (PA)
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