



**ADDRESS FOR THE LAUNCH OF CARITAS LEEDS**  
**Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2017**

*“What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well’ but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead”. This is the challenge and the teaching given to the Christian Church in the Epistle of St James (2:14-17).*

His Holiness Pope Francis insistently reminds us in his preaching and teaching that being a good Catholic is more than just believing the teachings of the Church. We must also be a witness to the love and mercy of God; this means our faith must be given expression through loving service, through our works of charity, our ‘caritas’.

The Church’s nature is expressed in her threefold responsibility of proclaiming the word of God, celebrating the sacraments and exercising the ministry of charity (diakonia). According to Pope Benedict XVI’s first Encyclical Letter, *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love/Charity), *“These duties presuppose each other and are inseparable”* (No. 25). Through our service of the poor and those in need, we give testimony to our faith. *“Deus Caritas Est, God is Love (1 Jn 4:8), the beginning and end of charity, which is the ordered expression of love of neighbour within the communion and mission of the Church”*.

The service of charity, *“the ordered expression of love of neighbour within the communion and mission of the Church”* is therefore is an important constitutive element of the Church’s mission. Consequently, the Church is called to the exercise of charity at all levels, namely: in small local Church communities such as the parish; at the level of the local diocesan Church; and on the national and international levels.

On the international level the expression of the Church's ministry of charity, Caritas, is carried out by the Church in England and Wales through the work of CAFOD. For that reason I would like to welcome colleagues from CAFOD. Also working at an international level is our own Leeds diocesan Peru Commission which supports the work of the Church there. We also have one of our diocesan priests, Fr Thomas Rathappillil, who is doing incredible work amongst the poorest of the poor in Tamil Nadu in India. There he has established a number of homes for the dying destitute where human dignity and care is given to those suffering from mental illness, the poor elderly and the destitute who, in many cases, are simply picked up from the roadside where they have been left to die.

I had the privilege of visiting Fr Thomas and some of the homes he has built there in January 2016 and I can testify to the fact that he is someone who, like St Theresa of Calcutta, is a living witness of a Church which is poor and for the poor. I would like to welcome to our launch, Amanda Wilkins and Mark Potts, who are two Trustees of the 'Charity Light for the Blind' which helps to support Fr Thomas' work in India.

At a national level, the expression of the Church's ministry of charity, Caritas, is represented by the work and co-ordination of CSAN, Caritas Social Action Network. And I wish to welcome particularly therefore, Dr Philip McCarthy, the Chief Executive of CSAN, who will be addressing us in a few minutes.

We are gathered here now this afternoon though for the official launch of 'Caritas Leeds' to give expression to the Church's ministry of charity at a diocesan level; and I am pleased to welcome all of you to this event. You have travelled from far and near to share in this important moment in the life of our diocese and I am most grateful to you all for your presence with us this afternoon. I am particularly grateful to the Reverend Dr Joseph Cortis, who has co-ordinated the preparation for our launch of Caritas Leeds today.

Through the establishment of Caritas Leeds, we will give a visible and co-ordinated expression to the Church's ministry of charity that is exercised by the many Catholic groups, associations and organisations that operate within the Diocese of Leeds.

Why is this local coordination necessary? In his Apostolic Letter *Intima Ecclesiae natura*, 'On the Service of Charity', (11th November 2012), Pope Benedict XVI stated that: "Wherever necessary, due to the number and variety of initiatives, the diocesan Bishop is to establish in the Church entrusted to his care, an Office to direct and coordinate the service of charity in his name." (Art. 8)

Pope Benedict reminded all those involved in Catholic social action that when we encounter those in need we encounter Christ and that when we serve the poor and vulnerable we are serving Christ. For Christians therefore, social action is an important way of proclaiming the Gospel. When this social action is carried out by us as through a 'Caritas' organisation, we do so as part of the Church and demonstrate to the world the love of Christ for all humanity, particularly for those excluded or neglected by society.

Caritas Leeds will be a new way through which the Church in this diocese will carry out its mission of service to charity. It will help people to appreciate the remarkable work that has and is being done by the Church in terms of the provision of social services in addressing the needs of the poor.

Caritas Leeds will help the Church in our diocese make the best possible use of the human, material and spiritual resources available to us. In doing all of this, we will be inspired by the values of the Gospel, by Catholic Social Teaching, the primacy of the common good, respect for human dignity, and the preferential option for the poor and those in need. Caritas Leeds will give expression to our collective social mission as a diocese. It will seek to support and enhance, not to replace or take over, the incredible work that is already being done by so many Catholic associations and local parish projects in the service of charity.

For example, one of the key members in the development of Caritas Leeds will be Catholic Care, which as you know is a well-established diocesan charity with a historic mission in the service of charity. As a member of Caritas Leeds though, it will benefit from a closer association and partnership with other organisations and local projects within the diocese, extending its own work to help address new challenges.

By working more closely together in this important area of the Church's mission, we can only enrich our service of the poor and needy, and enhance the witness to the love of Christ which we give.

Caritas Leeds will help to give witness to the dignity and value of every human life from conception until natural death; it will help to identify the new forms of poverty and need that are appearing in our society. Working also in close partnership with the Leeds Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission, Caritas Leeds will enable us to coordinate more effectively our response as a diocesan community to the needs of children and of families; of the elderly; of the increasing plight of the homelessness;

of refugees; of victims of human trafficking; and, of those trapped in modern slavery. These are just a few of the situations which demand from us an urgent response in justice and charity.

Today, we launch our vision for Caritas Leeds. But it must not remain just a vision; it will need to be fleshed out, quite literally, in the months and years ahead. We need to refine how Caritas Leeds will operate most effectively within the context of our diocese; this will take time. However, this will best be served by making a start, as we have today, by coming together as members of one local diocesan Church, intent upon following Our Lord's command to love our neighbour as ourselves and to serve Christ who lives in the poor and those in need around us.

I hope and pray that Caritas Leeds will help us, as a diocesan community, to translate that love of neighbour and our service of the poor into concrete actions and help us to coordinate, and to facilitate, our common charitable initiatives and actions.

May Mary the Most Glorious and Blessed Virgin Mother of God intercede for us as we seek together how best to serve her Son in the poor and those on the margins of our society and as we strive to give witness to our faith through loving service. Our Lady of Unfailing Help... Pray for us! St Wilfrid... Pray for us!

I thank you for your presence here today.

**✠ Marcus Stock  
Bishop of Leeds**