ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE,
WESTMINSTER, LONDON, SW1P 1QJ

Pastoral Letter for the Feast of the Holy Family
28 December 2025

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ,

Today's Feast of the Holy Family continues our rejoicing in the birth of Jesus, our hope and our salvation. This Feast has also been chosen as the moment in which dioceses throughout the world mark the end of the Jubilee Year with its theme of 'Pilgrims into Hope'. I think these two themes, of hope and family life, go well together.

During this Holy Year we have been reflecting on the virtue of hope and how it shapes our lives in good times and bad. Words of Pope Benedict showed us the way when he said that evoking the memories of goodness in our lives serves to open our hearts to hope. The experience of goodness and the awakening of hope go hand in hand.

Think, for a moment, of the goodness that has been part of our own lives: the love of friends we have enjoyed; the moments of great joy we recall, such as the birth of a child or moments of success; the kindness of neighbours and of strangers. Of course, to remember goodness does not mean forgetting the times of great distress and sorrow. That is always the mix in our lives. Generally, we are probably more likely to forget the good things and dwell on the bad. But this is a moment to grasp firmly all that is good in our lives and see it as giving us true hope.

Goodness gives rise to hope when we see it as a gift of God. Indeed, we believe that God uses so many different ways of touching our lives with grace and goodness. Circumstances that seem to be no more than chance are gifts of grace. God gives us people who are faithful and steadfast to encourage and enrich us, as well as utterly unexpected displays of faith and kindness from people unknown to us.

These gifts of goodness, like the gifts we have been exchanging in these days, are also promises. In giving these gifts, God is reminding us that we are never forgotten. His gifts proclaim that God always wishes us well, that God promises to us our true fulfilment, in his presence, for ever. This is the virtue of hope. This hope is not a vague feeling that things will turn out all right. Rather, hope is the strong and enduring belief that God will hold us in his love until, finally, he brings us into his presence in heaven. When we see goodness as a gift of God, then we understand hope as God's gift too.

Such an appreciation of goodness in every sphere of life gives rise in our hearts not only to a sense of gratitude but also to a willingness, on our part, to be generous in return. When we are touched by goodness then we are moved to be compassionate to others and to add to the sum of goodness in the circle of our living. In this way we begin to proclaim the love of God, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in our daily life and actions. Then we ourselves become agents of goodness for others.

Today, on this Feast, I thank all who work hard to sustain their family circle, to deepen its stability and love. Families, in so many different shapes and sizes, are the bedrock of our society and of our Church. I thank all who expend great love and effort to sustain family relationships, across generations, especially in times of crisis, hardship and distress. Surely the coming of Jesus into a family is the greatest sign that in the plan of the loving Creator the family is the first school of life. There we learn the meaning of love, of mutual trust that makes us who we are. This is what was occupying the mind of St Paul when he wrote those words of exhortation to every family that we have just heard.

But I am only too aware that for many the family can also be a place of the most profound dismay, a place in which rejection is experienced and suffering endured. Too many families struggle with lack of resources or outright poverty. These are critical challenges for our society and for our Church. We work and pray that the help which is provided never diminishes the role of the family but is provided in a manner which enhances the dignity of family life. So I thank all who work in our parishes and through our Caritas social action, to support and sustain those who are in need and losing heart.

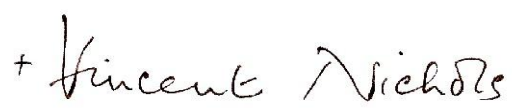
For me, one of the great sources of goodness and hope is to be found among our young people. I know that so many of you young people have a real love for the Lord and want to contribute to the reservoir of goodness in our society and world today. You have real concern for those in need and those who feel excluded. I also understand that you look for encouragement, support and leadership in your lives. I therefore rejoice in your families who are so often proud of you. And I rejoice in the work of our Youth services, in our parishes, in the Youth Centre in Pinner. I thank our young leaders who work in those Services and I ask you all to give them great support in the time ahead.

Now, as this Jubilee Year comes to a close, we are preparing to give a warm welcome to our new Archbishop, Bishop Richard Moth. My time of service to the Diocese of Westminster as your Archbishop, then, is coming to an end. I want to take this opportunity of thanking you all for your prayers, both those offered in every celebration of Mass and those made privately too. I thank you for the energy and generosity that is so often brought to the life of our parishes and diocese. I ask pardon for my failings, which, if I listed them, would make this Pastoral Letter far too long. And I ask for your prayers as I enter a new phase in my life, as a pilgrim into Hope. I am fully aware of the goodness that has surrounded me in the last fifteen years or so spent in your service. I thank you most sincerely.

I hope that you have celebrated Christmas joyfully and that these days of continuing holiday can also be holy days for you and your families, gathered round the crib and rejoicing in the goodness and blessings of this great gift of life.

May God bless you all.

Yours devotedly,



✠ Cardinal Vincent Nichols