



Pastoral Letter
to be read at all Masses
in the Archdiocese of Liverpool
on the Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
10/11 February 2018

My dear brother and sisters in Christ,

The Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes is on 11 February, but it has been replaced this weekend by the celebration of the Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time. By a happy coincidence the Gospel reading we have just heard reminds us of Jesus's concern for the sick and for those who are excluded by illness or medical condition from taking a full part in society or the Church. As you know, Lourdes is a place of pilgrimage, especially for those who are sick.

Jesus demonstrates his power over the dreadful affliction of leprosy by curing the sick man. He was not afraid to reach out and touch the leper. This gesture in itself is quite an amazing thing to do because we so often step back from our brothers and sisters who have a disease or need assistance. Jesus shows how to relate to such people who need our help, and to do it willingly.

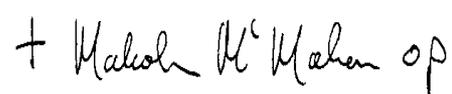
After the man had been freed from leprosy, despite being told to keep these events to himself, he started telling his story everywhere – and who can blame him? The twist in the story comes at the end when roles are reversed. The leper would have had to live outside the town because of his condition but can now take his place among others, while Jesus who had moved around freely, preaching his message of salvation now has ‘to stay outside in places where nobody lived’. The act of reaching out to the leper has cost Jesus his freedom, soon it will cost him his life.

Every July, the Liverpool Archdiocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes takes place. It is a rich experience of faith where over 1300 pilgrims, sick and healthy, priests and people travel together to seek Jesus through the intercession of Mary. We are especially blessed to have with us over five hundred of our young people who willingly travel overland to help our assisted pilgrims. Those who are sick or need assistance take pride of place at the heart of our week together. Without your support and generosity of service, they would not be able to experience a pilgrimage. In order to sustain our pilgrimage into the future we need you, the people in our parishes, to join us in giving of your time to serve the needs of our sick and assisted pilgrims. Our service of those who are frail is a powerful ministry and an ‘act of faith’ which not only enables them to experience Lourdes but also enables us to follow the Lord by reaching out to those for whom he has a special care. There is no doubt that those who make the personal sacrifice of making the pilgrimage will gain more than they give. Pilgrims return year after year because the spiritual gifts they receive at Lourdes help them throughout the year ahead.

Many of our faithful helpers have now had to step back from active participation as the years pass, and we urgently need more people to join our healthcare team, Hospitalité, Music Group, St Bernadette Team and Youth pilgrims if we are to continue to enable our pilgrimage to be a source of refreshment and renewal for us all. This weekend, every parish, Secondary School, Nursing Home, Hospital and Hospice will receive this message with a leaflet giving more information about the various sections of our pilgrimage and their roles. We hope that you will take these away with you, read them and seriously consider becoming a part of our pilgrimage family – using the information provided to contact us as soon as possible. We need you and what you have to offer, to bring new life to all our teams. Our Sick and Assisted Pilgrims need you so that they can continue to be pilgrims to this shrine which has provided so much healing for many years. We are ‘One Archdiocese’ and this ‘One Pilgrimage’ in the year brings our family together.

Please be generous in taking time to consider this appeal and I pray that you will have the courage to respond by joining us on this unique week of service of our Diocesan family.

May our Lady of Lourdes pray for you and your families throughout the year ahead,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Malcolm McMahon OP". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Rev Malcolm McMahon OP
Archbishop of Liverpool