



DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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Pastoral Letter to be read at all Masses on the Solemnity of Christ the King, 19/20 November 2022

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

In October 2021, I launched our Diocesan Year of the Eucharist, in which we celebrated the Eucharist at the heart of the life and mission of the Church. Since then, we have encouraged people to return to Mass and the Sacraments in our parishes after the Pandemic. We have grown as a Diocese in our love of the Blessed Sacrament and have deepened our appreciation of the Eucharist through the liturgy. We have been revitalised and renewed in our faith through a deepened prayer and devotion of our Lord's sacramental presence and strengthened and nourished to go out and serve the world. The challenges of the past year have deepened and enriched our love of our Lord in the Holy Eucharist. He is the source of our life and meaning. His outpouring for us on Calvary, celebrated in the Mass draws us on in our pilgrimage. Jesus feeds us on our life's pilgrimage as we discern together, through the Holy Spirit, the way ahead.

I will formally close our Eucharistic Year during Solemn Mass in St Mary's Cathedral today on the Solemnity of Christ the King. I want to thank all those who have created opportunities in our parishes and schools to celebrate this special year. I am especially grateful for our summer Corpus Christ procession and Benediction at Ushaw, which was so well attended by many of you. We are also grateful for the excellent resources which were prepared throughout the year and made available on the Faith and Mission section of the diocesan website.

Christ the King is also Youth Sunday when we celebrate the faith and commitment of our young people. We give thanks today for the Youth Ministry Trust and the Emmaus Village, which the late Father Dermott Donnelly worked so tirelessly for over the past years. We commend him to the eternal love of our Father in heaven and pray that the work he so faithfully carried out will be brought to fulfilment. May he rest in peace. Amen.

In today's Gospel, Jesus on the Cross promises the repentant thief: 'Today you will be with me in paradise.' (Luke 23:43) This promise he also makes and keeps with us, that we are his friends, his companions on the road to eternal life. Jesus' sacrifice on Calvary, which we celebrate in every Mass, draws us into the loving embrace of the Father. Christ is our King who shows us that it is in our suffering and sacrifice that we walk his way of the Cross to the Resurrection.

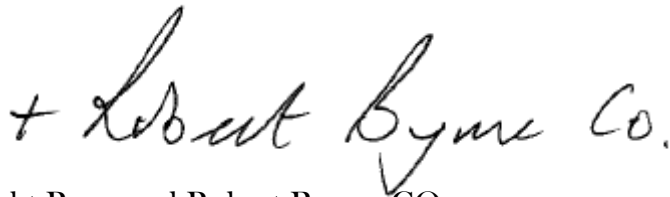
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On this Youth Sunday, we pray to Blessed Carlo Acutis, who was born in London in 1991 and died in his native Italy aged fifteen in 2006 from leukaemia. Blessed Carlo was in love with the Eucharist and was beatified on 11 October 2020. Pope Francis tells us that he 'is a witness for young people that true happiness is found when one puts God first. He did not settle into comfortable inaction but grasped the needs of his time because in the weakest he saw the face of Christ.' (Pope Francis, Angelus Address, 11 October 2020) Blessed Carlo expertly used the Internet to promote the beauty of the Eucharist which was the centre of his life. He said that: 'When we stand before Jesus in the Eucharist, we become saints.' And: 'By standing before the Eucharistic Christ, we become holy.' He encourages us of every age and especially young people to centre our lives on Jesus in the Eucharist, who is our way, our truth and our life.

As we continue to walk the path of the Synod at the invitation of Pope Francis, we look more and more to the Eucharist as the food for our journey through life. As we encourage our young people, especially through our Youth Ministry Trust, we encourage them, like Blessed Carlo Acutis, to seek new ways to enliven our love of the Eucharist and enrich our hope in the future.

Yours devotedly in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Byrne Co." with a small cross symbol at the beginning.

Right Reverend Robert Byrne, CO
Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle

