PASTORAL LETTER FOR THE SOLEMNITY OF CHRIST THE KING
21ST AND 22ND NOVEMBER 2026

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On this day in 2019, the Solemnity of Christ the King and the annual celebration of World Youth Sunday, I had the privilege of commissioning a team of young people, aged fourteen to eighteen years old, from parishes across the Diocese of Leeds. Inspired by the Apostles who went forth into the world to spread the Good News, we named the group, 'The Twelve'.

The team was founded to give a representative assembly of young people the opportunity to gather for prayer, fellowship and formation, and to be a forum where I could learn more about their aspirations and needs. Since that time, the group has contributed online to an international conference, and members have taken part in significant BBC Radio 4 broadcasts.

In the recent consultations that took place across the Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam, as well as in the reports submitted by the three dioceses following the Synod on Synodality, one of the principal concerns expressed was the need to give a voice to our young Catholics.

So, this is precisely what I am going to do in this Pastoral Letter. The message which follows has been written by 'The Twelve', and it is addressed to the young people of our dioceses. I consider it important that it is also heard by all the faithful, and it is for this reason I have included it in my Letter to you this Sunday. It comes with my blessing. This is their message:

> *"Dear young people of the Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam,*
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> *We are The Twelve, the Youth Leadership Team for the Diocese of Leeds. On this Solemnity of Christ the King, which is also World Youth Sunday, our focus is drawn to the theme of next year's World Youth Day in Seoul, South Korea: in the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ to His disciples, 'Take courage! I have overcome the world'.*[1]
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> *In a world of curated social media, having the bravery to show up as our true selves is one of the most courageous things we can do. As young people it is important to express ourselves, especially our Christian faith, and not let society or social media control our personality and behaviour. This requires bravery, a bravery which enables us to be ourselves and to be role models for others too.*
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> *We can also show courage and bravery by allowing the future to lie in God's hands. Matthew's Gospel reminds us of Jesus' call: 'Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest'*[2]*, assuring us that the future will be cared for and that we can trust in God. As young people, we are called to come together despite differences, to use our own gifts, skills and talents to share the Gospel, particularly as technology advances and new ways of sharing our faith arise.*

[1] John 16:33
[2] Matthew 11:28

Our patron saint, Carlo Acutis, showed this through the creation of his website to teach people about the many Eucharistic Miracles of the world, highlighting how in the contemporary world of the internet, AI and social media, it is possible to use these for good. St Carlo Acutis's faith was very important to him, and he witnessed to his faith through service to others, and by spending his time and any money he had to help the homeless and feed the poor. His faith also gave him courage and the grace to gain strength and comfort in his battle with leukaemia.

As this year marks the 800th anniversary of the death of St Francis of Assisi, we also want to reflect on the words of this beloved saint: 'Be praised, my Lord, through Brother Fire, through whom you brighten the night. He is beautiful and cheerful, and powerful and strong.'[3] These words remind us that, even though at times we may feel lonely being a young person of faith, we are not alone. Christ the King, the Light of the World, is with us and through his light which shines in us, we may help to brighten the night in the lives of others.

We may find a likeness in our own lives to that of St Francis of Assisi, as his life mirrored our desire to follow Jesus Christ and our search for identity, purpose, and a counter-cultural way to live. While growing up with wealth and comfort, he felt a deep emptiness in his life, so he searched for an authentic purpose. He found this purpose in his love and discipleship of Jesus Christ. His deep respect for creation relates also to many of the concerns of today's world about the changes to our climate and the future stability of our planet: concerns that many young people share today.

The life of St Francis of Assisi captures a practical, humble and action-focussed spirit, inspiring us to start by doing what's necessary, then doing what's possible and then, suddenly, we are doing the impossible. We believe that 'with God, all things are possible.'[4]

We hope you have a wonderful World Youth Sunday on this Solemnity of Christ the King. We ask you to pray for us, and may God bless you!

The Twelve"

I wish to thank The Twelve for their letter to us today and for the witness they give to their faith as young Catholics, in their families, their schools, their parishes and the wider community in which they live.

May Christ the King, the Light of the World, preserve our young people in His love and truth, and grant them the grace to take courage in Him; and may the prayers of His Blessed Mother Mary, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, keep them always safe under the protection of her maternal intercession. Amen.

✠ **Marcus**
Bishop of Leeds
Apostolic Administrator of Middlesbrough
Apostolic Administrator of Hallam

Given on 10th November 2026, and appointed to be read at celebrations of Mass, and made available to be taken away from the churches and chapels of the Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam, on the Solemnity of Christ the King, 21st and 22nd November 2026, World Youth Sunday.

[3] Canticle of the Creatures
[4] Matthew 19:16