

**A PASTORAL LETTER
FROM THE BISHOP OF LANCASTER
For the First Sunday of Advent 2022**



**APPOINTED TO BE READ AT ALL PUBLIC MASSES IN ALL CHURCHES AND CHAPELS IN
THE DIOCESE OF LANCASTER ON THE WEEKEND OF November 26/27 2022**

My dear people,

Today we begin the holy season of Advent, the time of preparing ourselves to welcome the Lord. We recall the message of the ancient Prophets, awakening the People of Israel to welcome the Saviour, and we remember our Blessed Lord's own words calling His disciples to be ready, to stay awake, that the Lord's Second Coming might find us alert, ready to welcome Him with joy. When that will be is hidden from us, known only to God. Between His first and His final coming, we are exhorted to be ready, even daily for His coming to us in the Mass, in prayer and in so many other ways, some subtle and some that may shock us.

It is a season when our Lord 'rattles our cages', intent on lifting us from our complacency or lukewarmness. We so easily become distracted or lose our enthusiasm. In the busy-ness of this life we allow ourselves to become absorbed with only the things of this passing life. He would have us return to contemplating and keeping in mind the things that are eternal, to the true Life that Jesus brought to us. He reminds us that whilst the way to heaven is opened for us, we must apply ourselves to the journey through prayer, penance and above all through acts of Charity. Drifting through life is not following the Good Shepherd, just as He did not drift: He was intent on reaching the destination.

As people of Faith, we are called by Jesus to rediscover the beauty of living as His people. May His unbroken promise to remain faithful re-awaken us, restore our Faith and put new heart into each of us, whoever we are and whatever our circumstances and whatever seems to imprison us. He 'rattles our cage' because He comes to liberate us from it.

We turn to Mary, who carried the hidden Saviour for nine months in the safety of her womb, the first to know her Lord's closeness. May she be generous in sharing her own Faith with you in these dark times. She brings us a gentle and sure light. May our prayers this Advent be especially with all those who carry new life within them, keeping in mind that so many unborn babies are at risk. May we be careful and caring with one another in these times that test us in so many ways. May He find us ready when He comes, awake and active in Charity.

With my blessing for you and your families.

+ Paul Swarbrick.

Rt Rev Paul Swarbrick
Bishop of Lancaster