



**Pastoral Letter of the Bishop of Nottingham
appointed to be read at all Masses
on the Second Sunday of Easter,
Saturday 6 / Sunday 7 April 2013**

My dear friends in Christ,

This Easter, as she does every Easter, the Church proclaims that Christ has truly risen from the dead. He is the Head of the Church and is very much alive in her, bringing us the joy, hope and comfort of the Resurrection.

At this time of year, we not only see nature come back to life, but there is a vibrancy in our faith, a spring in our step: after the works of Lent, we are filled with light and happiness as we rejoice in the new life which Christ has won for us in his Death and Resurrection, the great Paschal Mystery which we celebrate whenever we gather for Mass.

As part of our consultation on the parochial structure of our Diocese, *You are Living Stones*, I have assured you that there will always be a priest appointed to look after your parish and to care for you. Our priests are fundamental to our parish communities; we have got a lot to thank them for, and today I want to speak to you about them.

The priest's life is extremely varied. He proclaims the Gospel, celebrates Mass, administers the sacraments and serves his parishioners. Whether it is preaching on a Sunday or keeping the church clean and tidy, the priest is giving his life for Christ and his Church. He plays a part in the life of every family in his parish, and shares in your joys and sorrows, hopes and dreams, helping you to live the Christian life.

Each priest has his own joys and sorrows, hopes and dreams. When I look back on the thirty years since my Ordination to the priesthood in 1982, I can honestly say that I have experienced all the ups and downs of the priestly life – and I

am sure that my fellow priests would be able to say the same thing when they look back. But all of us, I hope, are able to smile and say that our ministry has been extremely fulfilling.

Today, I am supporting the launch of a lay-led initiative in our Diocese to help us say 'thank you' to our priests. We all love and care for them, and they are indispensable to our parishes and to our lives. In thanksgiving to Almighty God for blessing us by with good and holy priests, we are, all of us, now being asked to support an appeal for our sick and retired priests. A priest is a member of every family in his parish, but belongs to none. He lives in the same world as we all do, but relies solely on God rather than worldly riches or pleasures. Because of this, when a priest comes to retire, he should be able to turn to the Church for his pastoral care, just as we turn to him for support at other times.

There are many aspects to consider when a priest retires, such as where he will live, how he will be supported, and who will be his new 'family', as there will be no formal relationship with a parish any more. Many priests who are close to retirement will have the natural fears that many of us have when it is time to retire: who will look after him? Will he be lonely? Without the direct support of parishioners who have lived alongside him and been part of his life, who will fill that gap?


The retired priests of our Diocese hold a special place in my heart, as they do in yours. We all remember with affection the priests who inspired us and taught us when we were younger, the priests who were kind to us, and who were there when we needed to turn to them. I learn from them all the time; they are, in many ways, the *living memory* of the Diocese, of our parishes and communities. That is why I am asking you to be generous in supporting this appeal, even in these more difficult financial times.

This appeal to support our sick and retired priests will be made by your fellow parishioners, and has my full and active support. The reason that we are approaching you now is that the current fund which is designed to support our sick and retired priests will run out of money unless we act now; there are many priests approaching retirement who are currently still active in our parishes, and we want to provide for them. The sums raised in this appeal will be used well, managed carefully and accounted for in full. Every single pound will be, I am sure, accompanied by your love, support and prayers.

We need £5 million to replenish our fund, and over the coming months you will have a chance to hear about why this is needed, how it will be spent and how

you can help. Our priests have given their lives to serve you; please help me to care for our retired priests, now and in the future.

With my prayers and every good wish for you and your families this Easter,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a small cross symbol followed by the name 'Malcolm' in a cursive script.

Right Reverend Malcolm McMahon OP
Bishop of Nottingham



WOMAN OF FAITH ²⁰¹²₂₀₁₃

**Bishop's House
Nottingham**

April 2013