

# DIOCESE OF SALFORD



Wardley Hall, Wardley Hall Road, Worsley, Manchester, M28 2ND

26<sup>th</sup> February 2024

Dear Father,

Re: Financial concerns and Fundraising

There has been a lack of information and, indeed, some misinformation about various financial matters in the Diocese and it seems appropriate to write to you to clarify our current financial situation. This information may be useful for some parishioners who may have heard confusing and inaccurate reports.

About five years ago, the trustees were alerted to some serious problems in the fabric of the Cathedral. While there was clear evidence of plaster falling from the walls inside the Cathedral, investigations revealed much more serious erosion and deterioration in the structure. A full survey evidenced that a significant proportion of the Cathedral's external fabric was in a very poor state of repair. Work began in July 2023 and is programmed to finish in July 2025, but this will be dependent on whether further issues arise.

The Trustees of the Diocese were unanimous in deciding that the work must be done now. Any delay would only mean a speedy escalation in future costs of repair. The Diocese remains responsible for a listed building. The budget has already risen to something over £20million but that figure would quickly accelerate if there is further delay. The great majority of the repair concerns the external fabric, with a relatively small amount being used for internal redecoration and refurbishment. The costs of this restoration are not being met from any parish funding but from diocesan reserves, with hopes that there may be some grants from elsewhere.

Fundraising. As with most institutions, the Covid pandemic made a very demanding impact on finances. For some weeks churches were closed and there has been a slow and steady return of numbers when they were re-opened. Some parishes have substantial bank reserves, while others are in significant debt. I think this is the moment that we need to remind ourselves that, wherever we as clergy are appointed throughout the Diocese, the Diocese is a single family, a community of the Church and we must have a common care for one another and for the Diocese as a whole.

We need to fundraise, but we must be careful to do so without any sense of taxing the people. Any contributions must be freely given and without detriment to the donor's support of their own parish. The fundraising will be for the benefit of parishes and the well-being of the clergy. There are many people in the Diocese who are facing a financial struggle for themselves. Greater Manchester and the whole of the Northwest of England have a serious level of poverty, impacting especially on children. There is no question that people who have financial concerns of their own should feel obliged to

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contribute to a fundraising campaign. But there are many people who have wealth and who would understand the need to be fundraising for the welfare of the clergy and for parishes in need.

Having made a preliminary consultation, among a number of clergy and parishes spread across the Diocese, it is clear that this is not the right time to begin a major fundraising campaign. When we have the completion of the Diocesan Synod, and its decisions about our vision and priorities, we will have a clearer idea of the goals for our fundraising. We may in the interim need to review some of the printed materials and second collections for diocesan purposes, but these would not be new or substantial changes.

In common with all dioceses of England and Wales, Salford is being financially challenged. There is no question of a financial “crisis” but a need to be particularly careful in the management of our resources. The closure of the bookshop and the Cathedral Centre Café was necessary because we could not justify the losses which were being made, nor afford the year-on-year subsidies that they required.

It may be important for you to know that about half of the parishes are in debt and several of those are in need of building repair. While half the parishes have some money on deposit, a few parishes have significant amounts. The financial position of parishes has been subject to a number of factors, including the movement of people, poor church building work, residential building and clearance projects. It would be very good to achieve the position where all parishes were viable with some financial security.

You may wish to distribute some or all of the contents of this letter. I hope it comes with a sense of reassurance that we are facing challenges realistically and are developing a plan which will reflect the findings of the Diocesan Synod. We will return to the subject of fundraising, both in terms of objectives and methodology, when we have established our future priorities.

“Stay with us, Lord, on our Journey”

With my best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads '+ John Arnold'.

+ John Arnold  
Bishop of Salford

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