

**Richard**



**Bishop of Arundel & Brighton**

**PASTORAL LETTER  
for the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent  
1<sup>st</sup> December 2019**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today marks the beginning of the Church's Year. The Season of Advent is a time of joyful anticipation of the coming of Jesus Christ. We reflect not only on His Birth and on His coming at the end of time; but we must take time also to reflect on the way He comes to us each and every day and the life He calls us to live.

In today's readings, Jesus commands us to "wake up" and "stay awake". These words call the whole Church to be attentive and vigilant to what is happening in our local communities, our country and our world. Christ calls us to live lives of virtue and goodness so that we are prepared for the second coming. This Season of Advent calls us to reflect on the world around us; to see where we have been sleepwalking and failed to realise the impact of our actions. Christ calls us to examine our hearts and to see where sloth has replaced our desire to love and serve our neighbours both locally and globally.

One particular area in which we must "wake up" and seek conversion is in our attitudes towards our common home. So today I write to you about a very urgent matter about which I think most of us are at least aware, even though we may not yet have made a practical response. This urgent matter is climate change, our ecological crisis and how we care for our planet. We may have been fortunate, so far, in experiencing only relatively minor indications of Climate Change in the United Kingdom. Elsewhere in our world severe and long-term droughts, floods, rising sea-levels and record-breaking temperatures are clear evidence of the damage that our actions and our way of life are inflicting on the world. These have affected millions of people, most often in the poorest countries of the world.

Pope Francis is leading the way in calling us to be aware of what we have done to our world and the certainty that, without immediate and sustained action, we will inflict irreparable damage on our planet, adversely affecting the lives of future generations. The Holy Father tells us that every one of us must make changes to our lives and begin to repair the damage before matters become irreversible. It is time for us all to “wake up” and, if we have not already done so, engage in the practical actions necessary to make the essential difference.

This is a matter rooted in our Faith. Creation is God's gift to us and we are called to be stewards of creation. But for far too long we have exploited our world and its resources, often in ignorance as to the consequences, having no regard for the impact of our actions. But now we are coming to understand what we have done. We have time to correct the damage, if we act quickly.

This Advent we begin the Journey to 2030. The Journey to 2030 is an initiative which aims to mobilise the Catholic church to act on our ecological crisis. It was created by lay Catholic youth volunteers in our own Diocese, called the Ecological Conversion Group and is supported by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has pinpointed 2030 as the date by which we must curb our greenhouse gas emissions, in order to prevent irreversible damage to our planet. It is also the target date for the implementation of the UN's sustainable development goals. The Journey to 2030 aims to aid the Church in a conversion towards community building and caring for our planet and global family. It asks all people and organisations to come together and use their varied skills and influence to make a difference.

Resources will be sent to parishes to launch this campaign and I urge you to consider gathering friends and family to implement them. Copies of these resources will be also be available from the Journey to 2030 website: [www.journeyto2030.org](http://www.journeyto2030.org). May we all take a lead in following the Holy Father's call and make the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton a great example to our wider society in modelling behaviour that cares for our common home.

As we journey together towards our celebration of the Lord's Birth, let us pray for one another, for all our families and for all our parish communities, that we may be renewed in our commitment to the task the Lord has given to us, to be stewards of the gifts that God has given us and to call all around us to live in the love that exists in Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

May Mary, who rejoiced at the coming birth of Her Son, pray for us that we may truly be His disciples.

With every Blessing,

Yours sincerely in Christ,

