



Archdiocese of Southwark

Pastoral Message for the Launch of CARITAS Southwark

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ

I greet you in the name of the Lord Jesus as we continue our Lenten journey towards Holy Week and Easter. In this joyful season of renewal we seek the living water who is Christ himself. With the Samaritan woman in today's Gospel, we believe the Lord Jesus offers every person the gift of eternal life. He shows us that no one is beyond God's love; not you or me; not our neighbour; not the unknown stranger in our midst. The Lord Jesus asks us to be God's love for others, especially those in most need.

Today, I share with you the wonderful news that we are about to launch **CARITAS Southwark**. *Caritas* is the Latin word for love and **CARITAS Southwark** will be our Archdiocesan network to co-ordinate our practical loving service of others, putting faith into action.

Pope Francis said: '*.. there is an inseparable bond between our faith and the poor. May we never abandon them.*' (EG 48) **CARITAS Southwark** will work with our parishes and schools to support them in serving those in need. Our volunteers have worked hard to get us to this point of a **formal launch** in a **Mass in St George's Cathedral, Southwark, at 12.30pm on Saturday 18 March**. Everyone is invited to the Mass and the reception afterwards.

The Church has always served the poorest and the weakest. This happens today through our parishes, schools and social and charitable projects and organisations. In such challenging times, it is important that we strengthen and enhance our charitable outreach, rooted in our faith in Christ. This will build on the excellent work already taking place and provide encouragement and support for new initiatives. **CARITAS Southwark** is about facilitation and collaboration, building up our common bond of charity through a more considered identity whereby our Archdiocese can promote and recognise faith in action.

Many parishes already have projects in place. Others, as yet, do not have any specific or developed formal outreach. This is a time for all of us, clergy, religious, and lay faithful, to pray and reflect on the Scriptures, strengthened by the Eucharist, so as to discern how we live out the call to see and serve the Lord Jesus in our brothers and sisters in need. To all who already give their time and effort so generously in voluntary service to the Church's social mission, I extend my heartfelt gratitude.

Across our Archdiocese, a tangible love of neighbour is shown through numerous social and charitable projects. Such apostolates, and new ones which will hopefully come to fruition, require that our hearts be touched by the love of Christ and opened to the needs of others. It is through us, sometimes in simple and seemingly small ways, that the love of Christ becomes real and is freely offered to people in need.

Thank you for your assistance in this important new step. With an assurance of my gratitude, and my prayers and blessing

Yours devotedly in Christ, ✠ John Wilson, Metropolitan Archbishop of Southwark