



Archdiocese of Southwark

Pastoral Letter for the Solemnity of the Holy Family 2025

**To the Clergy, Consecrated Women and Men,
and the Lay Faithful of the Archdiocese of Southwark**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ

I extend to each of you, and to your families and loved ones, the peace and joy of this holy season of Christmas. Today, the Church places before us the Holy Family of Nazareth: the Lord Jesus, his mother Mary, and his foster-father Joseph. As the Jubilee Year of Hope draws to a close, we embrace anew the hope born for us at Bethlehem. Jesus Christ — who lived and was crucified, rose again, and is alive — is the hope of the world. In Christ, the radiant hope of God's love and mercy shines into every heart and family.

God encourages and comforts each of us according to our state of life: as husbands and wives, mothers and fathers, children and young people; as wider family members and single people; the elderly, the widowed, and as families who feel fragile, wounded, or incomplete. The Holy Family teaches that by remaining close to Christ, what is ordinary can, and does, become holy; that even our burdens and struggles are never without hope. Dear friends, whatever is happening in your family or personal life at the moment, receive the Good News: God sent his Son, the Lord Jesus, as hope for you. God is with you in Christ, and God loves you in Christ.

We know the Holy Family experienced upheaval and danger. They were refugees who fled to Egypt for safety, a reminder to us all to welcome those in need. Joseph kept faithful to what God had revealed, and Mary held

everything in prayerful trust. (cf. Mt 2:13-23) When our own families face uncertainty, illness, grief, or broken relationships, we too need to hold fast in faith and prayer. The Holy Family stands close to the members of every home as, moment by moment, we trust that God is present, even when the way forward seems unclear.

Many families across our Archdiocese face heavy burdens: for example, the cost-of-living crisis, the pressures of work or study, sickness or disability. Added to these are the loneliness that grows behind closed doors and the grief that changes everything. The Church is a family of families. In Christ, there are no orphans. When one member of the family suffers, all share the burden; and when one rejoices, all share the joy. Our parishes, schools, and chaplaincies need to be places where people feel they belong and are known by name; where the struggling are welcomed, where wanderers know they can come home, where sinners find forgiveness.

In the mystery of Christmas, the love of God took flesh and dwelt amongst us. How can we work together, co-responsibly, to help make that love real? How can we reach out and accompany those in need in our community: the housebound, the elderly, the bereaved, the isolated, the family new to the parish, and the person who sits alone at Mass? How can we strengthen what is already good amongst us: food banks, winter night shelters, parish support groups, care for prisoners, and school outreach? How can we make room for people who are troubled: those living with mental strain, addiction, or an uncertain future? Our faith in action, our loving practical charity, will always be attentive to the person in need before us, seeing Christ in them, even when this is challenging.

Today, we entrust our families, and our whole Archdiocese, to the Holy Family of Nazareth. Thank you to parents, grandparents, extended family, and carers, for your patience and quiet sacrifices that bring the truths of the Holy Family to life. Thank you for your efforts to hand on our beautiful Catholic faith to your children. Thank you, too, to our young people for your witness. None of us should ever be ashamed of the Gospel. Christ never diminishes life, but enlarges it. Those who entrust themselves to him are never disappointed.

As we give thanks for the graces of this Jubilee Year — not least our wonderful celebration at Aylesford — we recall how we have journeyed together more consciously as ‘pilgrims into hope.’ This hope remains with us and needs to be shared more widely as we become an ever more missionary and evangelising Archdiocese. The Holy Family reminds us that mission begins in the heart, and in the home; it grows in parish life; and it is called to bear fruit in the world.

May the Lord Jesus, Our Blessed Lady, and St. Joseph, keep us united in love and steadfast in prayer as, in the coming year, we set ourselves to reach out to others with the love of Christ.

With every blessing for this Christmas Season and the New Year,
and the assurance of my prayers and gratitude
Yours devotedly in Christ

✠ John Wilson

Metropolitan Archbishop of Southwark

Given at Southwark, 21 December 2025, the Fourth Sunday of Advent.