

**ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE,
WESTMINSTER, LONDON, SW1P 1QJ**



**Pastoral Letter for the weekend of 27/28 September 2025
Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

My dear brothers and sisters,

Monday, 29th September, is an important birthday. It is the birthday of our Diocese of Westminster, established on that day 175 years ago. The first Archbishop of Westminster, Nicholas Wiseman, was appointed by Pope Pius IX on 29 September 1850 and created a Cardinal the very next day. He served as our Archbishop until his death in 1865 and is now buried in our Cathedral.

So today and tomorrow we may rightly celebrate the Catholic life of this great Diocese, in the spirit of the words of St Paul we have just heard: 'Fight the good fight of the faith, take hold of the eternal life to which you were called'(1 Timothy 6:12). To mark this moment, I have asked Fr Nicholas Schofield, the Diocesan Archivist, to prepare a brief history of the Diocese, and this is readily available for you.

There are two dimensions I would like to suggest for these moments of celebration. They are, of course, centred on the grace of God and the immensity of God's goodness to us, His people. This grace works according to God's intentions, and not our own, and in ways that ebb and flow within the patterns of our own history and personalities.

Our Diocese in 1850 was not the Diocese of today. Catholic life was slowly emerging from centuries of opposition and suppression. Only gradually did we regain a recognised place in public and political life. Since then, circumstances, economic conditions, and provisions of public services such as education and health have changed beyond recognition. The violence of wars and international conflicts has taken its heavy toll. Throughout it all, our mission has survived and been fruitful. Parish life has been established, giving stability in neighbourhoods, schools have been founded and give witness to our faith, failures and problems have been faced, and we have played our part in public life and communal effort. There are so many ways in which we can be proud of those who have gone before us and handed on to us this great inheritance. Our duty is to hand it on to the next generations, better tuned to contemporary circumstances, responding to today's challenges and strengthened as ever by the bounteous grace of God. For the enduring resilience and responsiveness of so many in our past, and of so many today, we give great thanks to our loving God and Father.

Then there is a second reason for our gratitude to God on this birthday of our Diocesan family. While the offer of salvation and eternal happiness given in our Blessed Lord does not change, the manner of its proclamation, the ways in which it enters our lives, and bears fruit change greatly. The gift of faith knows no boundaries of nationality, culture, identity, or race. Today, in our parishes, there are wonderful Catholics who have come from very many different countries. Our parish congregations have a variety of colours and customs that reflect the streets of our cities


today. What binds us together, of course, is not our taste in food, nor in music, nor in pathways of piety or devotion. Rather, it is what lies at the heart of our faith: our intimate and shared love for Jesus, the Christ. He is the one who, in His life, death, and resurrection, gives joy to our days, forgiveness for our darkness, and hope for eternal life when our pilgrimage here is done. The gift of this faith finds a home in the people of every land. Their traditions, rich and varied, enliven and deepen the life of the Church in our Diocese. Together we stand before our Blessed Lord, welcoming one another, being formed into one body in Him, a visible demonstration of the universality of the Church which our forebears could never have imagined.

The appointment of Cardinal Wiseman as the first Archbishop of this Diocese of Westminster came as part of what is known as the 'restoration of the hierarchy in England and Wales'. This reestablished in these lands a succession of bishops appointed by Rome. Today, we gladly thank God for the great gifts of ministry of the Archbishops who have served this Diocese. Together with the clergy, with countless religious sisters, with lay leaders, they have guided our Church through so many difficult times and challenges, often with courage and at great personal cost. We know, of course, that Archbishops come and go. We know that God always provides, through the Church, for their succession and, even more importantly, for the fidelity of the Church through its holy people.

May God continue to bless our Diocese, the God who, in the words of St Paul, 'is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honour and eternal dominion' (1 Timothy 6:15-16). May God continue to bless our Diocese. May the Archangels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, our patron saints, our Blessed Lady, St Joseph, St Peter, St Edward the Confessor together with all the saints closely linked to us, including St John Southworth, St John Henry Newman and St Carlo Acutis, pray for us on this anniversary, encouraging us always to greater faithfulness and joy in the Lord.

May God bless you all.

Yours devotedly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Vincent Nichols", preceded by a small cross symbol.

✕ Cardinal Vincent Nichols
Archbishop of Westminster