



Caritas is coming

Paul Bodenham, Programme Leader for Social Action, invites you to a big day for the diocese on 28 March.

Nottingham Diocese is on the way to becoming part of the global Caritas network—and if you are a parishioner here, you will be part of it too.

You'll know about CAFOD, the Caritas agency which works overseas on behalf of the Church in England and Wales – you may even be a supporter yourself. Meanwhile Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN) connects agencies working here in England and Wales. However there is no branch of Caritas here in Nottingham dedicated to charitable service in the diocese.

Thanks to a grant from CSAN, that is about to change. The Justice and Peace Commission is leading a project to establish a Caritas service in the diocese. It will help parishes around the diocese to strengthen their outreach, and support everyone who is inspired by the Gospel to make a difference in the wider world.

We're building Caritas as part of ***Faith into Action***, the Justice and Peace Commission's wider development programme. It began in Lent 2019 with a questionnaire survey, which some two-thirds parishes completed.

From this research and our existing priorities, there seem to be five themes for which parishes and individuals frequently ask for help. These might become the core 'ministries' for which our new service offers support at a diocesan level:

- Safeguarding the Earth, our common home, including developing a diocesan environmental strategy
- Poverty and dignity, including tackling homelessness
- Modern slavery, human trafficking and exploitation
- Support for refugees and asylum seekers, which might include working with local charity Faith in Families to promote the Home Office's Community Sponsorship scheme for Syrian refugees
- Tackling isolation in society, for instance through friendship groups and drop-in cafes in church halls.

Caritas is for parishes, not just the diocese. In 2013 Pope Benedict asked each bishop to encourage 'in every parish of his territory the creation of a local Caritas service or a similar body, which will also promote in the whole community educational activities aimed at fostering a spirit of sharing and authentic charity'. A local Caritas can help to realise Pope John Paul II's vision of the parish: 'What better building block for a

community of hope than the parish', he said, 'which becomes 'a home in the midst of homes', a living community, one that supports, accompanies, integrates and enriches!'

And ultimately Caritas is for each of us—it enables us to be touched by the Gospel and take up Christ's invitation to follow him in the adventure of missionary discipleship.

So a crucial part of this initiative is to offer parish-based workshops with a trained team of animators. They will work with you and your parish priest to help you hear and act on your vocation, as individuals and as a community. Together we'll encourage each other to follow the call Jesus makes uniquely to us, asking questions like:

- How might God be calling you to use your gifts?
- What does the world need from you?
- How might we in the Church encourage and equip each other?
- How can we build the Church as a movement of faith and compassion for a world in need?

Join the Caritas journey

We'd love to hear how you are called to live the gospel—and together, let's discern together what Caritas might look like in our diocese. You are invited to Nottingham Cathedral on **28 March 2020** to explore with us how Caritas can help us put 'faith into action' in our parishes.

Very soon we'll publish a Caritas prospectus, which you can use in your parish, chaplaincy or Catholic group during 2020 to share in building a movement for Gospel life here in the diocese of Nottingham.

