PASTORAL LETTER TO PARISH COMMUNITIES AND LAY FAITHFUL
FOLLOWING THE CONCLUSION OF THE INTER-DIOCESAN CONSULTATION PROCESS
DIOCESES OF LEEDS, MIDDLESBROUGH AND HALLAM

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am writing to update you on the progress that has been made since my appointment by His Holiness Pope Leo XIV as Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Middlesbrough in December 2025, and as Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Hallam in March this year.

In the letters appointing me to those roles, Pope Leo asked me to initiate, among the clergy, religious and lay faithful of the Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam, 'a phase of study and discussion' with a view to their 'possible future union'.

Over the past eight months, an extensive consultation process has been undertaken across our three dioceses. It has brought together representatives from all of the one hundred and ninety-three parishes, including lay women and men, deacons and priests, institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life, the leaders of schools and school multi-academy trusts, and a range of Catholic organisations and apostolates.

Engagement in the consultation has enlivened a zeal for mission that is evident in the hearts of those who took part. It demonstrates too, the love and appreciation for the rich heritage of the saints and martyrs, and pride in the Catholic patrimony that exists throughout the whole of the historic County of Yorkshire and other areas of the territorial jurisdictions which our dioceses encompass.

The consultation has enabled us to consider the challenges we face in the future; it has also opened before us opportunities to strengthen our participation in the mission entrusted by Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to His Church, and to renew our vigour in responding to the work of evangelisation. The guiding principle which has underpinned our consultation has been not about how diocesan structures might change, but how those structures can better support the Church's mission today and in the future.

The results of this consultation process have now been compiled into a comprehensive report which I hope to complete and send to the Holy Father, through the Apostolic Nuncio and the Dicastery of Bishops in Rome, by the end of August for his and their consideration.

I will also publish the report before mid-October so that all those who have taken part in the consultation process can see just how valuable their generous participation has been. We will be able to examine the key themes which have emerged and use the report to learn how we can enhance and improve our pastoral care and our proclamation of the Gospel in today's world.

Whatever decision might be taken by Pope Leo about a possible future union, the strengthening of our ecclesial communion and the collaborative work which has already begun between our three dioceses will be of mutual benefit to our service of the Church's continuing mission in the future.

The Holy Father has said, *"The mystery of union with Christ lies at the heart of mission."* [1] It is this truth which has been at the heart of my vision for our consultation process, the vision and purpose which Our Lord Himself gave to His Church on the night before His passion and death: *"That they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me."* [2] And the mission we must pursue is the one given by Our Lord to His Apostles: *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* [3]

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to all those who have contributed to our response to the Holy Father's request for this period of study and discussion within the three diocesan communities of our one family in the Catholic faith. Trusting in divine providence and in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we now commend the outcome of this consultation process to the judgement of the Successor of the Apostles.

Please pray for me and for our priests and deacons, that the Lord Jesus Christ will: bless us with His strength to serve you who are the living stones of His Temple; grant us His wisdom to lead you who are His Holy People; and, pour out His love upon us to care for you who are His Beloved brothers and sisters.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help … Pray for us!

Our holy patron St Wilfrid … Pray for us!

Holy Martyrs of Yorkshire and Padley … Pray for us!

+ Marcus

✠ Right Reverend Marcus Stock
Bishop of Leeds
Apostolic Administrator of Middlesbrough
Apostolic Administrator of Hallam

Given at Leeds on 13th August 2026, and appointed to be read at celebrations of Mass, and made available to be taken away from the churches and chapels of the Dioceses of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hallam, on the Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time, Saturday 22nd/Sunday 23rd August 2026.

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[1] Message of Pope Leo XIV for the 100th World Day of Mission, 25 January 2026
[2] John 17:21
[3] Matthew 28:18-20