



The Holy See

***LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO BISHOP W. G. WHEELER ON THE CENTENARY
OF THE FOUNDATION OF THE DIOCESE OF LEEDS***

*To Our Esteemed Brother William Gordon Wheeler,
Bishop of Leeds*

How very happy was our predecessor Leo XIII, not many months after the beginning of his supreme Pontificate, to be able to recognise the positive maturity of the Catholic faith in this part of Britain, and still more to demonstrate the sound condition of the Catholic community there by setting up your new diocese of Leeds. So also we, who recently by the designs of Divine Providence now occupy the place and have taken on the duties of your founder, rejoice wholeheartedly first of all with you esteemed Brother, and then with the whole of the flock over which you have been placed, on the occasion of your approaching centenary and on the outstanding service and activity of Catholic life which has in a praiseworthy fashion continued uninterrupted among you for one hundred years. Likewise, we warmly congratulate you on the signs given throughout these hundred years of a desirable renewal and of the truly flourishing condition of Christian devotion and the practice of religion within the confines of the diocese of Leeds. This we have learnt to our great comfort from several documents.

Therefore, as if present among you, we desire to enhance and to honour, at least by this letter of ours, the truly memorable day, the twentieth of this month of December, on which the ecclesial community of Leeds came into being one hundred years ago. To your public and solemn religious sentiments we also want to add our heartfelt thanks and loving praise to the merciful Lord of the harvest, who by his heavenly help, brought it about that not only should the institution of the Catholic church be so happily revived there, but also that it should meanwhile continuously go from strength to strength with a threefold increase in the numbers of priests, faithful, and places for divine worship.

However, we very much desire and pray fervently to God that on the occasion of the celebration of

the hundredth birthday of your diocese, while this anniversary rightly gives you good reason to rejoice over the glorious history of the diocese in the past, it will at the same time inspire you all, pastors and faithful, and encourage you to love even more the one faith that has been handed down to you; to safeguard it, to spread it, to follow more faithfully the example of the Incarnate Son of God and to lead lives more fully in keeping with his teaching in the Gospel—this means to begin the second centenary of the diocese of Leeds, by God's grace and assistance, strong in hope and with great courage. Finally, then, since this most auspicious occasion has presented itself, we lovingly impart the Apostolic Blessing, as a pledge of continued divine favours, to you, esteemed brother, to your Auxiliary Bishop, the clergy, religious, and all the faithful of the diocese of Leeds.

Given at the Vatican on the fourth day of December in the year 1978, the first of our Pontificate.

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