



✦ **Bosco MacDonald**  
**Bishop of Clifton**

## **Pastoral Letter for the Feast of The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we gather to celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family, I greet you with joy and hope in the name of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph—the radiant model of love, faith, and unity. This feast reminds us that the family is not just a human institution but a sacred gift, a “domestic church” where love is nurtured, faith is passed on, and life is cherished. Today we stand at the threshold of the Holy Year of Hope reflecting on what it means to walk together as pilgrims of hope, committed to life and true compassion.

The Holy Family of Nazareth teaches us profound lessons about trust in God and mutual care. In their simplicity and humility, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph put God at the centre of their lives. They faced trials—poverty, exile, uncertainty—but remained steadfast in love and obedience to God’s will. Their example calls us to make our homes and parishes places of prayer, forgiveness, and service.

In this Jubilee Year of Hope proclaimed by Pope Francis, we are invited to renew our trust in God’s providence. The theme “Pilgrims of Hope” reminds us that even amid challenges—whether personal struggles or wider societal debates—we are called to make our way with hearts open to God’s grace.

This year’s celebration comes at a critical moment for our society. Recently, our Parliament has voted to advance legislation on assisted suicide—a decision that has sparked deep reflection about the sanctity of life and the meaning of true compassion. As followers of Christ, we are called to stand firmly on the side of life. Every human life is a sacred gift from God, deserving dignity and care from conception until natural death.

Advocates for assisted suicide argue that it respects autonomy and relieves suffering. But does this path truly honour human dignity? True compassion doesn’t hasten death; it accompanies those who suffer with love and care. It seeks to alleviate pain through improved palliative care and emotional support, ensuring no one feels abandoned or burdensome.

The Holy Family reminds us that even in moments of vulnerability, like Mary giving birth in a stable or Joseph fleeing with his family into Egypt, life is precious and worth protecting. Let us recommit ourselves to creating a culture where every person feels valued and supported, especially those nearing the end of life. Compassion means “to suffer with.” It calls us to walk alongside those who are ill or struggling—not by offering them an escape from life but by affirming their worth through our presence and care.

Pope Francis has reminded us in preparation for this Jubilee Year, that “*we must fan the flame of hope that has been given us.*” Hope shines most brightly when we choose life over despair, solidarity over isolation. The vote on assisted suicide challenges us as Catholics not only to pray but also to engage constructively in public discourse. We must speak with clarity about our belief in the sacredness of life while listening respectfully to those who hold different views. Let us be witnesses to the Gospel by offering an alternative vision—a society where no one feels compelled to choose death because they lack support or resources. This isn’t just a political issue; it’s a moral imperative. As St. John Paul II once said, “A society will be judged on how it treats its weakest members.”

As we enter this Holy Year of Hope, I invite you to make prayer your foundation. Pray for those who are terminally ill and their families. Pray for lawmakers and politicians making tough decisions. Pray for our Church called to be a voice for life and hope.

But prayer must lead to action. Consider offering material support to hospices and other organizations that provide end-of-life care. Open your heart to someone who might feel alone or overwhelmed by illness. There are small and simple ways in which we can contribute to creating a culture where people feel loved by God and valued by their community.

Dear friends, as we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family during this Jubilee Year of Hope, let’s remember that every family—like every individual—is called to reflect God’s love. May our homes be places where hope flourishes, where life is celebrated as a gift from God, and where compassion is lived out daily.

We walk forward into the New Year as pilgrims of hope—rooted in faith, united in love, and steadfast in our commitment to life. May Jesus, Mary, and Joseph intercede for us as we strive to follow their example.

With my prayers and best wishes to you, your families and your loved ones during this holy season.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Bosco" with a stylized cross or initial to the left.

Rt Rev Bosco MacDonald  
Bishop of Clifton