

Happy New Year everyone! And as 2026 begins, listen to these words from St Paul writing to the Colossians:

Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

I wonder what it is that motivates you and gets you out of bed in the morning? Some people are motivated by family, some by money, some by success or by ever greater power.

For the Christian there is only one motivation in our lives. As St Paul reminds us, everything – our work, our leisure, our family life - everything is done in the name of Jesus. Everything is for him.

2026 is a very special year for the Diocese of Blackburn. This year we celebrate our centenary, giving thanks to God for one hundred years of our parishes, our chaplaincies, our schools and our Cathedral.

But why? Why do we have the Diocese of Blackburn? What motivates us? Quite simply we exist in the name of Jesus. We are for him. So the best way – in fact the only way - to celebrate a centenary is to dedicate our lives to him anew. We celebrate one hundred years by doing everything in the name of Jesus.

In the name of Jesus we serve. A world terrorised by big egos and raw demonstrations of military power needs humble servants. So let 2026 be a year of service for you as you seek to care for the weak, the vulnerable and the struggling and do your best for your family and friends. Serve in the name of Jesus.

In the name of Jesus we proclaim. This is great timing for a centenary year with plenty of evidence that imaginations are being captured once again with the Christian faith. Many are seeking answers to their questions, and Jesus is the answer to every question. So let 2026 be a year in which you share your faith with others and invite. Proclaim in the name of Jesus.

And in the name of Jesus we trust. In Jesus God has come to share our life. And because he shares in our life, we share in his life. Think what that means – we ordinary mortals have been chosen to be friends with him to eternity. Jesus is our hope, our future, our glory. So let 2026 be a year in which you get to know him better. Trust in the name of Jesus.

Our centenary year has such a bold and simple title. All for Jesus. That's why we exist, that's what our motivates our words and deeds, that's who we are. So I hope that 2026 is a good year for you. And I pray that you will live it all for Jesus.

Rt Rev. Philip North, Bishop of Blackburn