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Feast of the Holy Family

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph no doubt experienced many of the same joys and struggles as any family. Over the Christmas season our hearts and minds have been drawn to the importance in all of our lives of family, friends and neighbours. Amidst the happiness of the seasonal visits, celebrations and good wishes, we also feel the loss at this time of the year of those who are no longer with us.

I write to you today to ask your assistance in raising awareness and promoting the option of Fostering in our homes and parishes. Foster carers are ordinary people who make an extraordinary difference to the lives of those children and young people who, for a variety of reasons, are unable to live with their birth families.

Mary and Joseph searched for somewhere safe and warm to have their child, and although there was no room for them, a kindly innkeeper pointed them to the stable where Jesus was born. Foster carers generously open their hearts and their homes on a daily basis to provide care, support and love to children in need. Unfortunately there are times when there are no available spaces left for foster care placements. That is why I'm encouraging you today to reach out and support HSC NI Foster Care and to help find new families who may have some space and time in their lives to come forward and consider fostering.

There are many struggles and challenges which lead to children and young people requiring foster care: sometimes material poverty and hardship; or parental struggles due to relationship difficulties or addictions.

On the weekend of the 14th and 28th January 2024, staff from HSC NI Foster Care will be making themselves available around Mass time in some of the churches of our parishes and, indeed, at churches across Northern Ireland. If your parish is one of those selected, I encourage you to welcome the HSC fostering staff involved and engage with them to find out more information for yourselves or someone you feel may be interested or simply curious to know more about fostering. Remember, if you do have a chat with our visitors, you are not committing to anything. Perhaps you, or someone you know, has been thinking about becoming a foster carer; this may be the time to put that thought into action.

I invite you also to pray for those who are foster carers and that more people will step forward to generously consider this option, in order to give a child the possibility of a brighter future.

Should your Church not be one of those chosen in the initial phase of this initiative I ask that you still consider promoting and praying for Fostering during the month of January.

A very happy New Year to you.

With every blessing and kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

+ Eamon Martin

Eamon Martin
Archbishop of Armagh