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天主教香港教區主教



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Bishop of Hong Kong

## Pastoral Letter for Advent 2018

### Practice, Belief, Youth

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

**“May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all” (1 Thessalonians 3:12).**

The Church in her liturgy begins the season of Advent with an expression of passionate and ever-youthful yearning for the coming of Christ, calling upon the Almighty God to grant all the faithful the resolve to “run forth” to meet Christ “with righteous deeds at his coming” (cf. Collect, First Sunday of Advent).

Thus, when the Gospel enjoins us to “Stay Awake!” (Matthew 24:37-44), we are expected to do more than just passively wait. It is **a call to prayer and action, to be doers and not just hearers of the Word**. Only then can we honestly and resolutely go forth—with expectant Hope and enduring Faith—to meet Christ our Blessed Lord.

Pope Francis writes in his introduction to the DOCAT, the book of Catholic Social Teaching for young people: “When I invite you all now really to get to know the social doctrine of the Church, I am dreaming not just about groups that sit under trees and discuss it. That is good! My dream is of something greater: I wish I had a million young Christians or, even better, **a whole generation who are for their contemporaries ‘walking, talking social doctrine.’**”

Let us therefore humbly implore the Heavenly Father to have mercy on his children, to send the Holy Spirit to purify and renew the Church and to strengthen us all so that we will not lose heart even at a time of crisis and great scandal in the Church. Let each one of us practise our faith to the fullest and courageously bear witness to Christ in total fidelity to the Gospel.

Authentic freedom is based on truth, therefore **authentic mission is based on true discipleship**: the Lord calls us to be his disciples and sends us on his mission to

proclaim the Truth that is Christ and to bring the Good News of salvation to all, with preferential love for the poor.

It is only when we **respond wholeheartedly to the Lord's call that we will discover and experience the greatness and beauty of the gift of mission**, especially when entrusted to our youth. Young people need to both know in their minds, as well as experience in their hearts, the beauty of truth and the tender power of God's love in order to share, speak and live the truth with love.

So to the young people who participated in the recently concluded Diocesan Year of Youth, may I say again, from the bottom of my heart, **thank you!** Thank you for the Spirit-filled joy and enthusiasm with which you celebrated the Diocesan Youth Festival on 14-15 July and energised the Youth Forums on Internet Culture and other activities organised, with your lively involvement, by the Diocesan Youth Commission. Thank you too for your sharing in the preparations for the Synod on Youth which took place in Rome in October this year. Let us continue to pray that it will bear abundant pastoral fruit.

It is in these and other ways that **together, we can build up trust and learn from one another how to live as true disciples and go forth on our mission of spreading the Gospel** and reaching out to people everywhere, indeed including evangelising cyberspace itself!

I truly believe that you, the young people, are not only our hope for the future. You are very much a part of our present reality. I cannot but be deeply moved by the transformative change—into loving, caring and committed followers of Christ - that I have personally seen and which can be brought about in people with the help of God's amazing grace.

That the Hong Kong society is ageing rapidly is irrefutable, as is the sad reality that many of our elderly people are left on their own and uncared for. The recently concluded Synod of Bishops 2018, as part of its urgent message to youth, has warned against living in a virtual cyber world and called on all to get in touch selflessly with the people around us in the real world, in particular, those who are solitary and helpless.

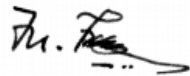
I have appealed to parishes, Caritas and schools to collaborate with young people, through remedial as well as positive development measures, in youth-oriented activities geared towards caring especially for those who are elderly, lonely and neglected. I thank all who have responded by providing, for example, youth leadership and spiritual formation programmes and allocation of space to youth groups for their activities as well as setting up a hotline to provide counselling and support services.

Let us all, through sincere dialogue and communication, help to revitalise the lives of both young and old, especially in today's increasingly fractured and segmented world. Inevitably, much more needs to be done at every level of the Diocese to build up a strongly supported and properly coordinated Youth Ministry. The parish is not and must not be perceived as merely an office. It is meant to play an absolutely vital part in the Church's mission, to be a home for prayer and a focus of unity and dedicated service and action. Only then can we, with God's grace, ever hope to succeed.

May the Holy Mother intercede to obtain for us the grace and strength to testify to God's perpetual love for us and to practise what we believe. "Here I am, I am coming to obey your will" (Hebrews 10:9).

As Advent 2018 is imminent, I hereby declare that 2019 Year of 'Practice, Belief, Youth' shall be, for the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong, the continuation of the 2018 Year of Youth.

Blessings be with you all and your loved ones, this coming Advent and always!

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