



AN INVITATION FROM THE BISHOPS OF AUSTRALIA TO THE YEAR OF YOUTH 2018

OPEN NEW HORIZONS FOR SPREADING JOY: *Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment*



7 December 2016

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Joy and peace to you. I give thanks for your faith and witness in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, in the communion of the Holy Spirit.

From the Catholic Bishops of Australia, I bring a message of deep joy and hope.

The Church in this land is entering a time of discernment as we move towards the Plenary Council of 2020 when we will chart a course into the future, with young people a crucial part of that journey. During 2018 the Church will contribute to the next Synod of Bishops in Rome, announced by Pope Francis as a dialogue on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment. In 2008 we celebrated World Youth Day in Sydney, the pilgrimage around Australia of the Cross of Christ and the Icon of Our Lady. In 2018, we want to engage with youth in new ways and they with us, helping young people to encounter God in Jesus Christ. We seek to awaken love and open your spirit to others so that you find and commit to the meaningful life God intends and so make a difference in the world.

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from the beginning of Advent 2017 to the end of 2018”*

We invite Catholics in Australia to celebrate a Year of Youth, from the beginning of Advent 2017 (Sunday 3rd December, 2017) to the end of Ordinary Time in 2018 (Sunday 25th November 2018). Here we will seek to open new horizons for spreading joy for the young Church and our communities. As we prepare with joy for this Year of Youth, we invite all the People of God to join us on this journey. The Year of Youth is a journey for the entire Body of Christ.

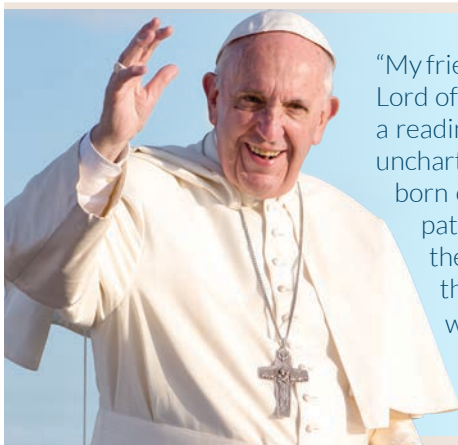
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to take a chance to make the world a better place”*

Throughout history, it has often been young people who have inspired renewal and change into new opportunities for witness and evangelisation. Many saints, including our own St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, were young adults when they set out on their path to holiness. Young people have a great capacity to address injustice and create new opportunities for joy and hope. Today, many young people want to serve, and others are willing to take a chance to make the world a better place. Leaders and older members of the Church must continue to listen to and benefit from the many graces of youth, supporting them to discern their vocation and identify their call in the world, within communities where they are safe, nurtured and respected. Working in partnership with young people's passion and energy will help us all become more fully alive as the Body of Christ. But all of us are called to a journey of conversion, which requires an open heart.





As Bishops we invite you, the youth of Australia, to open your hearts to Christ. You are deeply loved by Jesus and the Church. We appreciate your gifts and contributions, and we want to journey with you. At World Youth Day 2016, Pope Francis called young people and the Church to ‘open new horizons for spreading joy’.



“My friends, Jesus is the Lord of risk, he is the Lord of the eternal “more”. Jesus is not the Lord of comfort, security and ease. Following Jesus demands a good dose of courage, a readiness to trade in the sofa for a pair of walking shoes and to set out on new and uncharted paths. To blaze trails that open up new horizons capable of spreading joy, born of God’s love and wells up in your hearts with every act of mercy. To take the path of the “craziness” of our God, who teaches us to encounter him in the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the sick, the friend in trouble, the prisoner, the refugee and the migrant, and our neighbours who feel abandoned. To take the path of our God, who encourages us to be politicians, thinkers, social activists.”

Pope Francis, World Youth Day Vigil with Young People, 30 July 2016

These words of the Holy Father challenge us to welcome new opportunities for sharing the joy and hope of the Risen Christ. You have dreams for your future. Jesus also has dreams for you and your future. We want to accompany you as you discern the path that God has for you.

With Christ as our ever-present companion, we want to work with you to take courageous steps for building a civilisation of love where we can all become what God wants us to be.

“We invite all the People of God to join us on this journey”

To launch the Year of Youth, we invite you to the **Australian Catholic Youth Festival, 7-9 December 2017** in Sydney. The Festival will bring your peers and Church leaders together to celebrate the young Church of Australia. This invitation also presents a unique opportunity to go on pilgrimage to the shrine of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop in North Sydney.

In this Year of Youth, we ask you to listen to the deep questions in your life. Do not be afraid to question and to seek understanding. By doing so humbly and prayerfully, you equip yourself to fulfill your baptismal call to become missionary disciples in today’s world.

We entrust the Year of Youth in 2018 to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the intercession of Australia’s Patron, Mary Help of Christians. We draw inspiration from St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, whom we ask to pray for us and to join us on the way.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Archbishop Denis J Hart
 PRESIDENT, AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE
youth.catholic.org.au

