

Open New Horizons for Spreading Joy

My dear young people,

Jesus, the one put to death on the Cross, is alive! At Pentecost, our risen and living Lord sends us his Spirit of joy.

Filled with his Spirit, we know deep in our hearts that we are loved by God. We are empowered to take the **risk of faith** and to follow Jesus of Nazareth.

The Spirit of Jesus drives us forward.

The Spirit has no 'reverse gear' – the Holy Spirit is always challenging us to move and reach out in service of others.

The Spirit gives us the **courage and hope** to dare to live out the dream of Jesus for all people.

What is this dream of Jesus which fills our hearts with joy?

It is a different way of living, a different way of looking at the world and a different reason to exist. At the centre of it all, whenever Jesus preached, it was about one thing: "The Kingdom of Heaven is near."

What is the Kingdom of Heaven? It is a world of people defined by love for each other, life to the full, wonder and care for the earth and universe, filled with creativity and beauty.

It is a people of grace, hope, and joy, who love life and share it with others, who live larger than themselves, who have big dreams, big purpose, and big respect for the dignity of every person from the 'womb to the tomb'.

It is a community of people of prayer and humility, of compassion and great wisdom, where all give of themselves and are willing to make the sacrifice of love.

The Kingdom of Heaven is a world where peace reigns; where all the brokenness has been turned into **unspeakable beauty**.

Of course, the Kingdom of Heaven can never be finally achieved in our lives. But Pentecost challenges us to trust God's Spirit. The Holy Spirit's plans and love for us are **beyond our wildest dreams**.

We can all help make the dream of God's Kingdom come true with the way we live.

That is why we have called for 2018 to be a Year of Youth in the Australian Church, and why Pope Francis has called a new Synod to be held in October, to listen to young people from all over the world as they dream and give vision to our future.

Pope Francis tells us Jesus doesn't want disciples who walk reluctantly behind him: "Jesus wants people who have experienced that being with him gives immense joy that can be renewed each day in life." And he warns us all: "You can talk and talk and talk, but it will not make a difference if that bright light of joy is missing from your eyes."

So how do we **open our hearts** to these new horizons for joy? How do we "walk the talk"?

We Catholics have mentors in this mission. Good women and men who have gone before us, who have risked everything for Jesus. We call them 'saints'.

Saints are ordinary human beings who, despite their human fragility and vulnerability, live the joy of the Gospel.

But what did they do?

They were people of prayer who found time each day for God in the silence of their hearts.

They were also doers who had real personal contact with the suffering. Like St Vincent de Paul, Mother Teresa and Mary MacKillop, they were led to find practical ways of helping the poor, not expecting anything in return.

In our blessed and wonderful country, where most people are well fed, well educated, and well taken care of, joy is sometimes absent, as if some people were worn out and discouraged by the banality of their lives.

If, however, we radically follow in the footsteps of Jesus, our joys and trials merge and become compassion.

My dear young people, **take the risk of faith**. Also take the risk of service of others. Open your hearts, like the saints, to the most vulnerable and you will become more humble, more humane and more joyful.

This Pentecost let us rekindle our desire for joy, which is so deeply founded in us. Human beings are made for joy, not for gloom. And joy is not meant to be kept for oneself alone, but to be shared with others.

May the coming Synod for young people make real the words of the Acts of the Apostles: "the Lord declares -- I shall pour out my Spirit on all humanity. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your young people shall see visions" (Acts 2:17).

We look forward to these visions being fulfilled for all of us. God bless you all!



+ Denis J. Hart

ARCHBISHOP OF MELBOURNE