

Christmas message and greeting from our bishop

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Christmas is a celebration of life and family. The greatest gift God has given us is His own life, in the form of His son, who accepted a human body and was born into a family.

In the mystery of the Incarnation is revealed how the Almighty Creator came into our midst like a lonely helpless person, knocking on the door of Mary and Joseph.

Luckily He was accepted, and so Christ Jesus had a home. But was He accepted, or were Mary and Joseph first accepted by God?

The Christmas cards that we receive, no matter where they come from, by post or via the internet, often give one an illusion of peace and quiet—as if the baby does not cry, the first-time teenage mother does not fret or fuss and the righteous Joseph just stands calmly by.

The reality is somewhat different. As indeed is often the case, it is only through shared difficulties and tests that true joy is born and manifested—fruit of the family which is the field and garden of joy.

Everyone wants to be loved and accepted. Inclusive and affirmative family relationships give us love and a sense of belonging. To everyone, the family is the cradle of life and love, the place of birth and growth. People's ability to keep their promises and fulfil their responsibilities comes mainly from family life education.

The family is the first school of life or, in the words of Vatican II, “a kind of school of deeper humanity” (Pastoral Constitution of the Church [Gaudium et Spes] #52), for it is there that we learn, through practice, what truth is and the value of life and home, as well as the importance of love and justice.

I know what a great challenge it is for our younger generation, especially in today's Hong Kong, to establish a family and I would like to pay tribute to those who, having taken up the challenge with courage and generosity, welcome with grateful hearts the Lord into their homes as their treasured guest.

In the words of Pope Francis: “A family's living space could turn into a domestic Church, a setting for the Eucharist, the presence of Christ seated at its table” (Joy of Love [Amoris Laetitia] #15).

Life has its ups and downs but a family that is built on a foundation that is as solid as rock can face the difficulties and tests of life with sustained hope and confidence.

I wish every family to be built on the love of Christ and that, after the joyful festivities are over and even amidst the din of life's struggles and worries, we can all still see the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph standing by our side and protecting us always.

A Blessed Christmas to all, young and old! May your homes be filled with every blessing! And may true joy and peace which only the Lord can give remain with you and your loved ones!

† Michael Yeung
Bishop of Hong Kong

香港主教楊鳴章 2017 年聖誕賀辭

基督內親愛的姊妹弟兄：

「有一嬰孩為我們誕生了，有一個兒子賜給了我們。」（依九 5）

聖誕是一個生命的慶典、家的慶典。天主給我們最大的恩賜，就是將自己的生命，以兒子的形式，接受了人的軀體，誕生在一個家庭中。降生成人的奧跡，顯示了全能的創造主，來到我們當中，竟然像一個孤獨無助的人，要敲瑪利亞和若瑟的門。幸好祂被接納了，基督耶穌有了一個家。可是，是他被接納了，還是瑪利亞和若瑟首先被天主接納了？

我們所收到的聖誕賀卡，不管是從哪裡來的、郵遞或網絡下載的，常常給人一種只有安靜祥和的錯覺，沒有描繪出嬰孩是會啼哭的、從未懷孕過的少女必有初為人母的忙亂、仗義的若瑟一定需要奔走張羅。事實上並非如此；真正的喜悅，常常是通過共同承擔困難與考驗後才能彰顯，而家庭正是構建這份喜悅的田園。

人人都希望被愛和被接納，包容和肯定的家庭關係帶給我們愛和歸屬感。對每個人而言，家庭就是生命與愛的搖籃，是出生和成長的地方。人之能信守承諾、肩負重任，主要是來自家庭教育。家庭是我們來到世上的第一所學校，是一種培育豐富人性的學校（梵二《牧職憲章》#52），我們在這裡，通過實踐，學習到真理、生命與家的價值、愛與正義的重要。

我深深體會到，尤其在今日的香港，對年輕的一代而言，要成立家庭，需要付出何等的勇氣和慷慨，面對多大的挑戰，才能感謝迎接主，作客他們家中。我因此向他們真誠致意。教宗方濟各說：「一家人生活的空間，可成為家庭教會，作為舉行感恩祭的場地，讓基督臨在，同坐一席。」（《愛的喜樂》#15）

生命常有跌宕，建築在磐石上的家，可以經得起考驗，儘管面對困難，仍然有信心和希望。我祝願每一個家庭都能建立在基督的愛上，在慶節的歡樂過去後，在煩鬧爭執聲與憂慮中，仍有耶穌、瑪利亞與若瑟所組成的聖家，恆在你身旁佇立守護。

祝願你們家庭中的每一位，不論年長年輕，都滿懷基督聖誕的喜樂與平安。

✠楊鳴章

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