



Office of the Titular Roman Catholic Archbishop of Singapore

Archbishop's House
31 Victoria Street, Singapore 187997

T: 6895 1555 F: 6895 1551
Email: archoffice@catholic.org.sg

7 February, 2014

AN INVITATION TO PRAYER AT WORK

My dearest fellow workers in the one vineyard of the Lord,

Thank you for sharing in our mission to proclaim the Good News to all creation, within and without the Church. As you are all aware, the battle cry of the Universal Church is the urgency of the work of the New Evangelization which entails, in the first place, a personal conversion of every Catholic, from the Pope to the bishops, priests, religious and laity. The primary conversion is a renewal of our personal relationship with the Lord, encountering Him in a real and personal way so that we can effectively and convincingly proclaim the joy of the gospel to all those who do not yet know Him.

As Pope Francis wrote, "I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since "no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord". The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realize that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms." (EV 3)

Our task, as Pope John Paul II in *Novo Millennio Ineunte* wrote, is "to reflect the light of Christ in every historical period, to make his face shine also before the generations of the new millennium. Our witness, however, would be hopelessly inadequate if we ourselves had not first contemplated his face." (NMI 16) Furthermore, we face the new challenges of our time not by inventing a new programme. "The programme already exists: it is the plan found in the Gospel and in the living Tradition, it is the same as ever." (NMI 29) Consequently, he urges us to form Christian communities of prayer. "Our Christian communities must become genuine "schools" of prayer, where the meeting with Christ is expressed not just in imploring help but also in thanksgiving, praise, adoration, contemplation, listening and ardent devotion, until the heart truly "falls in love". Intense prayer, yes, but it does not distract us from our commitment to history: by opening our heart to the love of God it also opens it to the love of our brothers and sisters, and makes us capable of shaping history according to God's plan." (NMI 33)

Pope Francis also exhorts us saying, "Evangelization demands familiarity with God's word, which calls for dioceses, parishes and Catholic associations to provide for a serious, ongoing study of the Bible, while encouraging its prayerful individual and communal reading." (EG 175)

Drawing inspiration from the exhortations of Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG) and his predecessors, therefore, I want to encourage all Archdiocesan organizations and entities to pray every day at office, if possible, the morning, midday and evening prayers from the Liturgy of the Hours. There should also be a prayerful sharing of the scriptures together at least once a week. We must really be the first recipients of the Good News among ourselves

who work in the Lord's vineyard, so that it becomes a lived event that we communicate to others in our various apostolates.

On my part, I have gathered my staff in the Archbishop's office to pray together at least once a day, if not three times a day, depending on their availability. Whenever possible, I also celebrate the Eucharist with them. In due course, I intend also to institute weekly or monthly Holy Hour. I believe that if pastoral workers pray together, the Lord will empower us, bless us and our loved ones and, most of all, unite us in fraternal love in our common mission. In this way, we also cultivate the spirituality of communion and make our offices truly a school of communion where we learn to live and work with each other, encouraging and affirming each other, forgiving and accepting each other's frailties and, most of all, recognizing each other's talents as something which we all can rejoice because, together, we build the kingdom of God. Finally, if it is not too much, I urge all employers of Catholic organizations to encourage their Catholic workers to take a five-day paid leave to do an annual spiritual retreat and, if necessary, for the organization to subsidize the retreat if done locally.

I reiterate once again that if we, pastoral workers, are not evangelized ourselves on a daily basis we will have no zeal to evangelize others. Consequently, `A tomb psychology thus develops and slowly transforms Christians into mummies in a museum. Disillusioned with reality, with the Church and with themselves, they experience a constant temptation to cling to a faint melancholy, lacking in hope, which seizes the heart like "the most precious of the devil's potions". Called to radiate light and communicate life, in the end they are caught up in things that generate only darkness and inner weariness, and slowly consume all zeal for the apostolate. For all this, I repeat: Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the joy of evangelization!' (EG 83)

Courage! My fellow co-workers, brothers and sisters in Christ, let us gather to pray regularly in our places of work, feeling the Lord closely by our side inspiring, consoling, and encouraging us to set out into the deep! Without prayer our work will become sterile and mundane, lacking vitality and joy. With prayer, our work becomes a vocation; our offices a place of joy, of fraternal love, a place where we proclaim the joy of the gospel to each other and to the world.

May the Blessed Virgin, Star of the New Evangelization, help us to bear radiant witness to communion, service, ardent and generous faith, justice and love of the poor, so that the joy of the Gospel may reach to the ends of the earth, illuminating even the fringes of our world. Amen!

Yours in the Joy of the Gospel

Archbishop William Goh