



Bishop Stephen Wright

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Pastoral Letter for the Feast of Christ the King / World Youth Sunday To be made available at Masses

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today we celebrate the Feast of Christ the King, which is also World Youth Sunday, a day when the Church gives thanks for the life, faith and witness of young people in every parish and community.

In today's Gospel, as Jesus hangs upon the cross, we hear the words of the repentant thief: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And we hear Christ's merciful reply: "Today you will be with me in paradise." Here we see the heart of Christ's kingship, a love that never gives up on anyone, that welcomes, forgives and transforms. His kingdom is one of compassion and service, not power or privilege.

That same spirit of love and service is alive in the young people of our Diocese. Through the work of the Youth Ministry Trust (YMT), our Diocesan Youth Service, countless young people encounter Christ through retreats, missions and festivals at the Emmaus Youth Village, and through outreach to schools and parishes. These encounters help them to discover that they are known and loved by God, and that they have a vital part to play in the life of the Church.

I have seen this faith in action most powerfully through the Youth Council and the Youth Section of our Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes. In Lourdes especially, I have witnessed the joy and generosity of young people as they serve the sick and vulnerable with such humility. Their witness reminds us that the Gospel is most alive when it is lived in love.

When the members of our Youth Council were asked what they most wanted help with, they responded, "Evangelising our friends." What a hopeful and inspiring answer, a sign that the Holy Spirit is truly at work among our young people.

As Bishop, I am deeply grateful for the ministry of YMT and for all who support it. Yet there is always more to do. Today I ask you to keep our young people in your prayers and, if you are able, to support the work of YMT through the retiring collection at the end of Mass. Gift Aid envelopes are available, and every contribution helps us continue this mission of faith and hope.

I would now like to share with you a reflection written by Anne Joy, a young person of our Diocese, whose words capture beautifully the spirit of this day.

“As we gather to celebrate Youth Sunday, I am aware how vital it is for every young person in our diocese to know: you belong here. In a world that can often feel unstable and overwhelming, our faith gives us direction and hope, a reminder that each one of us is loved, known and called by God.

The Church does not call young people to journey alone; it calls the whole community to walk with you. Pope Leo encourages young people to “have open hearts” and to listen to “the inspirations of the Spirit”.

My own faith has grown through being part of the Youth Council and through pilgrimage experiences such as Lourdes. In Lourdes, I witnessed what it means to serve, to meet Christ in others, especially in the vulnerable and suffering. Whether it was offering a prayer, sharing a smile, or pushing a wheelchair, I saw that small acts of love become moments of grace. Faith is not meant to remain internal; it is made visible in how we live, serve and relate.

Within the Youth Council, I’ve been privileged to see young people from across our diocese unite in faith, mission and friendship. The Council is more than a leadership group. It is your voice to the Bishop and the diocese, a way for youth to share ideas, hopes and challenges. Through gatherings such as The Source, a diocesan evening of worship, prayer and fellowship, and residential, we experience not just connection but a stirring of what God wants to do among us.

This Youth Sunday, we celebrate not only the gifts you already bring, your creativity, compassion and courage, but also the mission that lies before you. Young people are not merely the future of the Church; you are the present.

You are invited to step closer to Christ, to discern how He is calling you, to use your gifts to serve others, to be the light in places of darkness. Whether through volunteering, serving in parish youth groups or simply living through love, every act, however small, matters.

Youth Sunday is a reminder that together we say “yes” to God’s call, trusting that in our young people lies the energy, vision and hope to renew the Church.”

Anne

Pope Francis reminds young people: “You are invited by Christ to follow him and sit beside him, to listen to his heart and share closely in his life.”

May this World Youth Sunday renew in all of us that same invitation, to listen to Christ, to walk with our young people, and to rejoice together in building His kingdom of love.

With assurances of prayers



✠ Bishop Stephen Wright
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