

# DIOCESE OF HEXHAM AND NEWCASTLE



✠ *Rt Rev Séamus Cunningham*  
*Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle*



November 2018

My Dear People

## **Pastoral Letter for Youth Sunday – Feast of Christ the King**

Today is Youth Sunday, a day in the Church when we celebrate the gift of young people and the important role they play in our parishes, partnerships and diocese. The theme for this year's Youth Sunday is 'Joy'. We are challenged to be joy filled. In today's Gospel Jesus challenges us to listen to His voice, to hear the truth that He brings to us all. Today we question in a world of 'fake news' what is truth? It begins by recognising that each one of us is a beloved child of God. We can only see what is fake when we know what is true. The truth that God knows and loves us unconditionally, moves us to live the life Jesus calls us to - namely to live a life filled with joy, a joy that sustains us through the challenges, difficulties we may face. When we hear the truth of Jesus it is not something motionless, like water in a pool. Rather, it flows in us, like living water, for when we hear it, it enters the mind, moves into the heart and we are filled with the utter fullness of joy that comes only from God. When that happens, we can't help but become the hands and feet of Jesus, putting together piece by piece a beautiful but broken world.

As the synod on young people, gathered in Rome last month the synod fathers who were present had been presented with a preparation document stating that, "Taking care of young people is not an optional task for the Church, but an integral part of her vocation and mission in history... just as our Lord Jesus Christ walked alongside the disciples of Emmaus (cf. Lk 24:13-35). The Church is also urged to accompany all young people, without exception, towards the joy of love."

In this Diocese we are blessed with incredible young people who are thirsty to know God. We are also very blessed to have The Youth Ministry Team otherwise known as YMT based at our very own Emmaus Youth Village at Allensford, near Consett. YMT offers opportunities for young people from across the diocese to grow in faith, working alongside schools, parishes and partnerships, accompanying our young people so that they too, may come to know Jesus in a deep way. Just as Jesus did with the disciples in the story of Emmaus, we too must journey with our young people toward the joy of love, to support them to live the lives God intended all of us to live. YMT provides opportunities like Faith in Action and the Pope John Paul II award schemes, The Youth Council, missions in our schools, regular events such as The Source, summer festivals and residential retreats at the Emmaus Youth Village. They have also developed a new discipleship program called Transcend for young people wanting to go even further in faith.

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YMT works tirelessly with thousands of our young people each year, offering opportunities like these and more, but the world is a difficult place for young people today. They often feel lonely and abandoned. The Youth Ministry Team recognise the need to do more. YMT aims to reach areas not yet reached, call young people who don't feel called and to spread the Joy of the Gospel to those who haven't encountered it. For this to happen we need each other's help.

As Bishop I am truly grateful for the many people who give of their time to inspire our young people by journeying with them in faith. I am grateful too for everyone that has offered prayer and financial support to ensure that youth ministry grows in this diocese.

As Pope Francis said:

*'Faith has to do with encounter, not theory. In encounter, Jesus passes by; in encounter, the heart of the Church beats. Then, not our preaching, but our witness of life will prove effective.'*

To all of you who are taking part in this journey with our young people - I say "thank you". I ask, and I pray, that you will continue to support the work of the YMT and youth ministry in this diocese.

With my very best wishes



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*Invite a young person to share an experience from over the past year which has helped them to grow in faith. This could be an event or an encounter that happened at, a Festival, The Source, TRANSCEND discipleship program, participating in the Pope John Paul II Award etc.*

*Let us listen to ... who will share with us part of his/her faith story over the last year. If a young person shares an experience, make a response on behalf of the community to thank them.*

*You may wish to mention something that is happening in your parish or partnership youth ministry and invite people to come along.*

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