

The First Pastoral Greeting

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord

“May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ send you grace and peace” (1 Cor. 1:3).

In the summer of 1952, I ended my six-year course of philosophy and theology at the Regional Seminary, Aberdeen, received priestly ordination from the then Nuncio to China, Archbishop Riberi, and went to Fuk Tak Centre, at Tung Tau Village (the present Nativity of Our Lady Church) to take up pastoral work. That was truly a season of excitement and expectation for me.

Now, 23 years later, I find myself sent back here to take up the pastoral care of this diocese. I come, in St. Paul’s words, “in weakness and in much fear and trembling.” (1 Cor. 2:3) Yet St. Paul also says: “For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another,” (Rom. 12:4-5) and “as for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, ... for God has welcomed him.” (Rom. 14:1-3)

That was St. Paul's instruction to the Christians of the early Church on accepting one another in love. I know that these counsels of St. Paul's are still dear to the Church, today, and this knowledge comforts and heartens me.

I have a concrete example of this charity in the support and love that the diocese has offered me. This gives me courage, and for this I should be, and am, very grateful.

In the past thirty years science and technology have made huge strides. The scientific world has advanced far into the atomic age, and it has established inter-planetary travel. Hong Kong has shared in this progress, and has changed greatly in many ways. Twenty years ago, multi-storey buildings were rare; now, many of them are shooting up, thirty storeys and more. In the Church, Vatican II opened a new era. The council was paralleled in Hong Kong, by the Diocesan Convention.

As for myself, I was a young man when I left Hong Kong; now I am well into middle age. Have I grown psychologically and spiritually as I have grown physically? For comfort in face of this disturbing question, I must turn to St. Paul again: "If we live by the

truth and in love, we shall grow in all ways into Christ, who is head.” (Eph. 4:15) In these words, I have found the criterion of and the way to, maturity. I also derive from these words a guiding principle for my new pastoral ministry: “to live by the truth and in love.”

With Paul, truth goes beyond the mere realm of intellect. We must live by truth and in love if we are to grow to maturity in Christ. What we say of truth we say of faith. By faith we believe the revealed truth of God; it is by faith that we live. A man who, through faith, discerns the things of God, must commit himself to God and his neighbours for God’s sake, throughout his life. “Take the case of someone who has never done a single good act but claims that he has faith. Will that faith save him? ... Faith is like that: if good works do not go with it, it is quite dead.” (Jas. 2:14-17) “It is not those who say to me, “Lord, Lord,” who will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the person who does the will of my Father in heaven.” (Mt. 7:21)

Living by faith should be conjoined with living in love. “Love does not come to an end ... In short, there are three things that last: faith, hope, and love; and the greatest of these is love.” (1 Cor. 13:8, 13) If I have all the eloquence of men or of angels, but speak without love,

I am simply a gong booming or a cymbal clashing. If I have the gift of prophecy, understanding all the mysteries there are, and knowing everything, and if I have faith in all its fulness, to move mountains, but am without love, then I am nothing at all. If I give away all that I possess, piece by piece, and if I even let them take my body to burn it, but am without love, it will do me no good whatever. (1 Cor. 13:1-3) “The love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given us.” (Rom. 5:5) We must therefore pray to our Heavenly Father, that from the abundance of his infinite glory, he may give us strength through his Spirit to our hidden selves that we may grow strong, that Christ may live in our hearts through faith, and that we may be planted in love and built on love (Eph. 3:14-17)

“The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve,” (Mt. 20:28). Christ set us the example of serving and he asks us to imitate him. We must “wash one another's feet”, as we see from (Jn. 13:14-15). We are members of a body and each part has a separate function (Rom. 12:4). We must then do as we are bidden in (1 Pet. 4:8-11): “Each one of you has received a special grace. So, like good stewards responsible for all these different graces of God, put yourselves at the service of others.”

I have now been appointed bishop of this diocese, a heavy burden and a grave responsibility. I feel that I, in my weakness, am facing a challenging situation, which makes me tremble.

I recognize the great achievements of the Church here, within the diocese and in the whole community; smooth relations between the Church and government; good cooperation between civil society and the Church; friendship with the different Churches and religion. This diocese has, moreover, a long history. The Catholics form a large group here, the organization of the diocese is strong and sound, and the Church has made considerable contribution to social welfare. We must all strive to maintain and develop the work of our Church. I am deeply conscious of my unworthiness to lead the diocese, but let me tell you from my heart that I give myself fully to the task entrusted to me, with all trust in the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit in imitation of my predecessors here. I ask all of you with loving insistence to use the gifts which the Holy Spirit has given you, in working together for the proclamation of the Gospel and in serving the People of God here.

My brothers and sisters in the Lord, at this moment, as I return to this diocese to take up the post of the bishop,

I pray from the depths of my heart that the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with you forever.

+ John Baptist Wu
The Bishop of Hong Kong