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# FROM THE CHAPLAINCY

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## Dear Woodrose Parents

Happy New Year to all of you! In preparation for the celebration of the 500th Year of Christianity in the Philippines, the CBCP has declared 2019 as the Year of the Youth. The occasion was officially opened last December 2, the first Sunday of Advent, and will close on November 24, 2019, the feast of Christ the King. The year-long celebration will reflect on the theme “Filipino Youth in Mission: Beloved, Gifted, Empowered”.

As a school dedicated to the education and formation of young girls, we in Woodrose share in the Philippine Catholic Church’s recognition of the Filipino youth of today as vital members of the Church entrusted with a mission. We share with you below the pastoral

letter of Archbishop Romulo Valles, the President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) to the Filipino youth.

## **Filipino Youth in Mission: Beloved, Gifted, Empowered**

Dear young people,

Grace and Peace to you all!

We, your shepherds, thank you from our hearts for coming together to chart the course of our celebration of your year, the Year of the Youth. We commend your courage in expressing your very selves through the “Open Letter of the Filipino Youth to the Catholic Church”. We delight in your recognition of your being vital members of the Body of Christ, the Church. As a response to your letter (1), the Philippine Catholic Church embraces you and your being life-given and life-giving, and with you, we affirm that:

### **You are BELOVED.**

Just like John the beloved disciple, who in his youth was called by the Lord to follow Him, the Church loves you with special affection, and we share with you the same call from the Lord. You are loved by the Father [cf. Dt 1:31; Is 40:11; 41:10; 46:4] as Jesus declared to His disciples, “As the Father loves me, so I also love you” [Jn 15:9], and He then invites you to remain in His love by following His commandments [cf. Jn 14:15]. Only then will you experience the joy that is complete [cf. Jn 15:9-11]. The Church in the Philippines seeks to show you the same love [cf. PCP II, 385; KA-LAKBAY, pp. 35-41], especially through her youth ministry, whose aspiration is to raise you up and carry you lovingly through life, with all its trials and tribulations.

**“...the Church loves you with special affection, and we share with you the same**

### **You are GIFTED.**

The Sacrament of Baptism you received initiated you into the life of God and with God. Through the Sacrament of Confirmation, you were gifted with the Holy Spirit who inflames you with faith, passion, and courage. Like the young lay missionary catechist St. Pedro Calungsod and Richie Fernando, the young Jesuit who died shielding his students from a grenade explosion, your fresh and energetic youthfulness is also a gift, enabling you to commit yourselves in service of others, as well as renewing the Church and the world. To the countless youth volunteers and missionaries who share their gifts in the building up of God's Reign—upholding and defending life and human dignity, the environment, justice, freedom and peace, among others—your families, the Church and our society recognize you, and need more of your willingness and dedication. You

clearly remind us that a life embraced and shared wholeheartedly contributes to the ongoing work of creation and glorifies God.

**You are EMPOWERED.**

In the face of so many problems and difficulties today affecting our Christian life, families, social relationships and communities, as well as various personal and socio-cultural concerns you raised in your letter (mental health, substance abuse, HIV-AIDS, access to education, environmental problems, human trafficking, politics, dialogue with cultures, digital community, etc.), you are able to exhibit the humility to seek the support that will lead you to discover your strengths and capabilities to live meaningful lives.

Like Mary, you are humble enough to proclaim “How can this be...?” [Lk 1:34] and still give your assent in faith. This pleases not only the Lord but also your elders, because you are making us an important part of your development into mature individuals, fully aware of being persons called by God, capable of discerning decisions that positively impact your lives and those of others.

We all long for a better world and society, for a renewed Church, and we see you as protagonists of this change, as the dynamic force of the Church now, when you reach out to the peripheries to bring Jesus and His message of salvation to the lost, the least and the last, including other young people like you who yearn to be loved, gifted and empowered.

## PRAYER FOR THE 2019 YEAR OF THE YOUTH

*God our Father,*

*We come together as Church, the Body of Christ,  
and through Your Holy Spirit,  
We pray for our young people  
in this Year of the Youth.*

*In Your great mercy, You sent Jesus, Your Son,  
who grew up as a young man among the youth,  
became an example for the youth,  
and consecrated the youth to You.*

*Hear our young people  
every time they proclaim:*

**A:** *We are BELOVED.*

**B:** *We praise You for Your love for us,  
which saves us and gives meaning to our lives.*

**A:** *We are GIFTED.*

**B:** *We rejoice over the many gifts You give us,  
enriching us and our communities.*

**A:** *We are EMPOWERED.*

**B:** *We accept Your Spirit Who enables us  
to share Your love and grace  
especially to other youth.*

\* In common prayer, the A and B parts may be said in either of these three ways:

A: to be recited by young people  
B: to be recited by the rest of the assembly

Or

A: to be recited by males  
B: to be recited by females

Or (particularly in places where the assembly is divided into two groups)

A: choir 1

B: choir 2

The rest of the prayer is recited by the whole assembly.

Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines  
Episcopal Commission on Youth

*During this Year of the Youth,  
help the youth of our nation encounter Christ  
who always looks at us with love  
as He did with the rich young man,  
the disciples on the road to Emmaus,  
and those who seek Your Kingdom.*

*Form us by Your Holy Spirit  
into credible guides for our young people,  
like Mary Magdalene, witness and missionary  
of the Resurrection,  
to be IN MISSION:  
joyfully proclaiming Christ  
who died and rose again.*

*Nourish us and our young people  
through Your Word and Eucharist,  
so we may always choose to be life-giving,  
especially to the least, lost and last.*

*Together with our young people,  
may we follow the example of our Mother Mary,  
whose YES to You, O God,  
gave way to the fulfillment of Your Divine will.*

*We make this prayer  
through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.*

*St. Pedro Calungsod, patron of Filipino youth,  
pray for us.*

**You are IN MISSION.**

We look at you, our young people, so full of dynamism, as disciples sent on a mission to make disciples for Jesus. We pray that your discernment, choices and actions will lead you to a purposeful life—whether in the ordained ministry, consecrated life, marriage and family, or the single state—with the Spirit of the Risen Christ directing your steps in making and leaving a marked difference in the world and society [cf. Mt 28:19-20]. As we look forward to 2021, we envision that the celebration of the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Christianity in the Philippines will be a time to celebrate a bountiful harvest from your ranks—youth committed to families, to the Church and to the country with a renewed passion to proclaim the Word, ready to work with their communities and the Church, and willing to share in molding a just and peaceful world through missionary involvement. As the Holy Father Pope Francis challenged you, we also say: “So make a mess! But also help in cleaning it up... a mess that brings a free heart, a mess that brings solidarity, a mess that brings us hope, a mess that comes from knowing Jesus and knowing that God, once I know Him, is my strength” (from the WYD2013). Awaken the shepherds in us, your elders, and rekindle the fire of faith, hope and love in everyone in the Church so that together, we can journey and minister with you, as you serve the Church and your fellow youth.

We appreciate your courage and openness to welcome the Year of the Youth with all its challenges and hopes. May you overflow with joy and trust that can only come from your encounter with Jesus through your moments of prayer, from the celebration of the Eucharist and other Sacraments, through the reading and study of the Word of God, in your pastoral youth formation activities and gatherings, in your participation in the life of your local churches, and through your works of mercy and charity.

Lastly, like the two disciples who were met by Jesus on the road to Emmaus [cf. Lk 24:13-35], you are invited to open your eyes and ears, your minds and hearts: listen with a disposition of faith in Him, so you may turn your steps from a world of fear and despair towards that of God’s Kingdom. Together with the Synod Fathers, we express our wish to “continue the journey now in every part of the earth where the Lord Jesus sends us as missionary disciples” (letter of the Synod Fathers, October 28, 2018).

With Mary our Mother who, in her youth trustingly said to the angel “Be it done to me according to your word” [Lk 1:38], may our own FIAT resound this 2019 and beyond!

For the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines

+ ROMULO G. VALLES, D.D.  
Archbishop of Davao

President, Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines

December 2, 2018

First Sunday of Advent

- (1) Cf. An Open Letter of the Filipino Youth to the Catholic Church in the Philippines, <http://cbcpnews.net/cbcpnews/an-open-letter-of-the-filipino-youth-to-the-catholic-church-in-the-philippines/>

