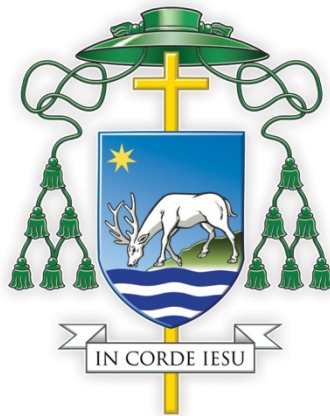


BISHOP OF PORTSMOUTH

Rt. Rev. Philip A. Egan BA, STL, PhD



MESSAGE FROM BISHOP PHILIP to all the Students of our Secondary Schools on the occasion of the Jubilee Year of Mercy

My dear Friends,

Happy Holy Week and Easter! I wanted to send you a note as we come near to those days which are the holiest days of the year: Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday. These are the days on which Jesus celebrated the Last Supper, died on the Cross, descended into hell and rose gloriously from the tomb. By dying, He destroyed our sin, suffering and death, and by rising, He has opened for us the way to lasting happiness and heaven.

As you know, 2016 is special because it is a 'Year of Mercy.' Pope Francis wants us to keep a 'Year of Mercy' in order to experience for ourselves personally the limitless mercy of God, especially in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. He also wants us to put God's mercy into action by shewing it to others, especially the poor and needy, through performing corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

I have enjoyed reading about some of the ways you and your schools have been keeping this Year of Mercy special. But I am writing now in order to give you a copy of the splendid letter the holy father has written to teenagers for this Year. Please find it overleaf.

Meanwhile, I thank you for all you are doing to serve Jesus as His young missionary-disciples. Thank you for your love of Him in the Holy Eucharist. Thank you for choosing good and for keeping your faith, despite the complex secular culture in which we live. Always remember that it is the Truth that will set you free; error enslaves. Happy Easter – and God bless you!

In Corde Iesu,

+Philip

13th March, 2016 - Fifth Sunday of Lent

POPE FRANCIS
MESSAGE FOR THE JUBILEE OF MERCY
"Merciful Like the Father"

Dear Young Friends,

The Church is celebrating the Holy Year of Mercy, a time of grace, peace, conversion and joy. It is meant for everyone: people of every age, from far and near. There are no walls or distances which can prevent the Father's mercy from reaching and embracing us. The Holy Door is now open in Rome and in all the dioceses of the world.

This grace-filled moment also concerns you, dear young people. I encourage you to take an active part in this celebration and to realize that each of you is a child of God (cf. 1 Jn 3:1). I would like to invite you, one by one, calling you by name, as Jesus does each day. For you know that your names are written in heaven (Lk 10:20), in the heart of the Father, that Merciful Heart which is the source of all reconciliation and kindness.

The Jubilee is a year-long celebration, in which every moment becomes a chance for us to grow in holiness. It is a time when we can discover that life together as brothers and sisters is like a great party, perhaps the most beautiful party we can imagine, the endless party that Jesus has taught us to celebrate by his Spirit. The Jubilee is the party to which Jesus invites us all, without excluding anyone. That is why I also wanted to have some days of prayer and celebration with you. I am looking forward to seeing many of you in April.

"Merciful like the Father". This is the theme of the Jubilee, but it is also the prayer we make for all of you as we welcome you in the name of Jesus. To be merciful means to grow in a love which is courageous, generous and real. It means to grow physically and spiritually. You are preparing to be Christians capable of making courageous choices and decisions, in order to build daily, even through little things, a world of peace.

Yours is a time of life which is full of amazing changes. Everything seems possible and impossible all at once. I repeat what I said to some of your friends: "Remain steadfast in the journey of faith, with firm hope in the Lord. This is the secret of our journey! He gives us the courage to swim against the tide. Pay attention, my young friends: to go against the current; this is good for the heart, but we need courage to swim against the tide. Jesus gives us this courage! ... With him we can do great things; he will give us the joy of being his disciples, his witnesses. Commit yourselves to great ideals, to the most important things. We Christians were not chosen by the Lord for little things; push onwards toward the highest principles. Stake your lives on noble ideals."

Here I cannot forget those of you who are living in situations of war, extreme poverty, daily troubles and loneliness. Don't ever lose hope! The Lord has a great dream which, with your help, he wants to come true! Your friends, young people your age living in less trying conditions than your own, have not forgotten you; they are working for peace and justice for everyone everywhere. Don't be taken in by the messages of hatred or terror all around us. Instead, make new friends. Give of your time and always show concern for those who ask your help. Be brave and go against the tide; be friends of Jesus, who is the Prince of Peace (cf. Is 9:6). Everything in him speaks of mercy. Nothing in him is devoid of compassion.

I realize that not all of you can come to Rome, but the Jubilee is truly for everyone and it is also being celebrated in your local Churches. You are all invited to this moment of joy. Don't just prepare your rucksacks and your banners, but your hearts and your minds as well. Think carefully about the hope and desires you will hand over to Jesus in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and in the Eucharist which we will celebrate together. As you walk through the Holy Door, remember that you are committing yourselves to grow in holiness and to draw nourishment from the Gospel and the Eucharist, the Word and the Bread of life, in order to help build a more just and fraternal world.

May the Lord bless your journey towards the Holy Door. I pray that the Holy Spirit will guide your steps and enlighten you. For you and your families, and for all who help you to grow in goodness and in grace, may the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of us all, be true Door of Mercy.

FRANCIS

(From the Vatican, 6 January 2016, Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord)