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A Jesuit Secondary School

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Dear educators, parents and Wahyanites,

The Christmas season signifies that we are being ushered into a new beginning soon. Getting set for a new year, from time to time, we have to look back in order to move forward. At times, circumstances might cloud our vision. Yet, what matters most is not how murky the current situation seems to be, but how we cast our eyes on our past, discern, react, rise to the challenge and take the future in our stride. The recollection is an inward journey, listening to the voice of God. In this time of Christmas, let us cultivate interior recollection so as to receive and keep Jesus in our lives. We look forward with joy and hope.

Looking back on 2021, it has been yet another curious year of the COVID-19 pandemic, which feels like we have again been shoved onto a roller coaster ride that knows no stops. We have witnessed the spread of the virus since 2019, and then the emergence of vaccines which seem to offer a hopeful way out of the pandemic fatigue, but soon, the whole world is deflated by the ever-morphing variants that constantly escape control and mar the normal. All in all, it feels like we have been through a lot, but at the same time, there is also a strong sense of emptiness and futility lurking behind.

The looming pandemic stress, if not frustration, could indeed be read in parallel with the fateful wound that plunged St. Ignatius into darkness and depression 500 years ago, the Cannonball Moment. Had there not been a cannonball that crippled the right leg of this proud soldier, St. Ignatius would not have had the time and space to reflect on his insatiable desire for vainglory. Through constant reflection and discernment on his desperate sickbed, St. Ignatius resorted to in-depth reading and was determined to acquire as good an education as the circumstances permitted in order “to be able to help souls”. It was precisely the hopeless situation that invoked the inner conversion of St. Ignatius, allowing him time and space to reflect, make meaningful changes, improve, and journey on – and later found the Society of Jesus. Had there not been the cannonball, Wah Yan would not have been able to offer Jesuit Education to countless generations of Wahyanites for the betterment of our shared world and the greater glory of God.

Guided by keen discernment, it is possible to see hope in desolation, like the way St. Ignatius did 500 years ago. We should be inspired – especially in this opportune time of the Ignatian Year – by the very wisdom of Jesuit Education to pierce through the looming backdrop of the pandemic and see all things new in Christ. Nevertheless, we shall never forget that it was in darkness when Jesus entered our lives; and the overarching theme of Christmas is hope.

Life is full of vicissitudes, tinged with joy and melancholy. Once, one little girl asked Pope Francis, “Why does God allow children to suffer?” Pope Francis replied to her with a hug. My take would be: God allows us to suffer so that we learn to love and to be loved. God wants us to have a conversion, so He allows us to have sufferings. Your sufferings may be failures in your examinations; my sufferings may be setbacks in my life. Nobody has an easy ride in life. When we have hard times, go deep into our hearts through reflection, and learn to find God in all things. God wants us to become better and stronger through reflecting on our trying moments.

Wahyanites, when you tumble, don’t blame others or make excuses, but rise magnificently from where you fall and move forward with the wisdom you gain through reflecting on your hiccups, initiating your own conversion to see all things new in Christ. Just like what Rocky Balboa, the boxing legend, said to his son, “The world isn’t all sunshine and rainbows. It’s a very mean and nasty place, and I don’t care how tough you are; it will beat you to your knees and keep you there permanently if you let it. You, me or nobody is going to hit as hard as life. But it isn’t about how hard you hit; it’s about how hard you get hit and keep moving forward. That’s how winning is done! Now, if you know what you’re worth, then go out and get what you are worth. But you will be willing to take the hits and not point fingers, saying you aren’t where you want to be because of him, her, or anybody! Cowards do that, and that isn’t you! You’re better than that!”

In 2022, we are all starting anew. In the face of the volatile and unpredictable future, it takes discernment, audacity, and our fighting spirit to explore and try. At Wah Yan, we do not only learn but grow together. It is from setbacks that we grow stronger and rise taller. Growing is a process of transformation – and in this sometimes painful process, you are not alone and can rest assured that I will always be there for and with you as your companion.

From 3 January 2022 onwards, I look forward to welcoming you back to this beloved campus with the resumption of whole-day face-to-face classes. I hope that you can recapture a vibrant Wahyanesque school life – also be inspired by St. Ignatius and enjoy reading extensively in our newly renovated state-of-the-art library.

Let the hope of Christmas and the spirit of Magis guide us in the times ahead. I wish you a happy Christmas and a sparkling 2022.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Warren Chung". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Warren CHUNG
Principal