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PASTORAL LETTER FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT 2017

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I suspect that most, if not all of you, have seen at least one of the "Mission Impossible" films. There seem to be so many of them, but essentially they all revolve around the Tom Cruise character taking up a mission that seems impossible but he gets the job done. So, really, the title of the films is quite incorrect. Mission Impossible should really be Mission really quite Possible, though I suppose that is less impressive as titles go.

In essence, that is the message of advent. It is a time to reflect on our call to imitate Christ and to know that this is not a "mission impossible", but it is mission possible and, indeed, mission essential.

On this first Sunday of Advent, the Church begins her four-week preparation for the celebration of Christmas, the birthday of Jesus Christ, our Lord and saviour. The liturgical colour of Advent is purple, which suggests that there is a certain penitential dimension to this season, and today's readings stress the need to stay awake and be ready as we await the coming of the Lord.

According to the tradition of the Church there are three comings of the Lord. The first; when He was born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem to fulfil the ancient prophecies made by God to His people, Israel. The second coming is the saving presence of Christ in each new generation of believers as they live out their daily lives in obedience to His teaching. His third and final coming will be at the end of time when He returns in glory as judge, and to make all things new. Our lives might be described as an Advent, as a time of waiting in faith for the final coming of our saviour.

During His time on earth Christ taught us to pray for the coming of God's kingdom. Each one of us, therefore, is called upon to play our part in building up that kingdom by what we say and do in the ordinary events of every day. The prophet Isaiah in the first reading sets before us his divinely

inspired and magnificent vision of universal peace, when the weapons of war will no longer be employed, and the nations of the world live together in harmony under God. It is a reality for which we all yearn. Never doubt that it is a mission that is possible, but only through the Prince of Peace.

Here in England, as I write to you, the days are short and the dark night falls quickly. I know it is very different in the South Atlantic. Our winter is your summer. You are blessed with an abundance of light. Yet there is another kind of light, and the apostle Paul urges us to stay awake and watch for the approaching light of Christ. The days and weeks leading up to Christmas are busy for most of us; but the lovely season of Advent gently reminds us to stop, take stock, to remember and make our own the great truth of our faith that the Son of Mary still knocks today at our door, desiring our company and friendship, and that He will finally return to take us home to heaven. To become a saint is not mission impossible - it is mission essential and, with the grace of God, all things are possible. Trust in Him!

It is now over a year since I was appointed to look after you all. Despite being so far away, you are in my daily prayers. Each day I say a rosary for all of you. For me, a major project in this past year has been to set up a UK based charity to help with the work of the Church in the South Atlantic. This new charity will support all our parishes and help source funds to enable the work of the church to flourish on all the Islands. Setting it up was a difficult task to complete, and at times felt like "Mission Impossible", but, thanks be to God, it has been set up and will now support you in your work for the Kingdom of God.

Dear brothers and sisters, I pray that Advent may be a grace-filled time for you and your families, and that you may experience all the blessings of Him, who is the Prince of Peace.

With the assurance of my blessing and prayers and please pray for me,

Your brother in Christ,

+Hugh Allan o.praem.