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Let us remain faithful and true to the Lord!

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I wish you an abundance of divine blessing and many experiences with God.

It is a nice tradition to exchange best wishes with one another at the beginning of a new year. But we can do much more for each other. We can also pray for one another and ask God: "Bless my brother! Strengthen my sister! Protect and comfort them."

And this is something we can do every day throughout the year. I am thinking about our brothers and sisters who live in regions where there is war, hardship, and violence. But I am also thinking about those who suffer a lot in body and heart. Dear brothers and sisters, you can be sure that many are praying for you!

The Apostles pray in particular that everyone will be able to reach the goal of our faith: the return of Christ. Let us also prepare for this in the new year. Let us continue to follow our training programme, with its annually changing focal points.

We have already occupied ourselves with the themes of love, joy, victory, and glorifying God. This year we will occupy ourselves with another important characteristic of the bridal congregation: faithfulness to Christ.

In addition to love and joy, faithfulness is another important aspect of a bride's nature. It will not work any other way. But how can we demonstrate our faithfulness to Christ? Allow me to mention four points here:

- being faithful to Christ means *following his example*.
- being faithful to Christ means *preserving our love even in difficult times*.
- being faithful to Christ means *wanting to serve*.
- being faithful to Christ means *keeping our promises*.

These are the most important points.

The theme of faithfulness is a very broad one. It incorporates such central notions as sincerity, trustworthiness, steadfastness, and reliability. In the year ahead, we will look at the numerous different facets of faithfulness.

Why? Well, it's really quite clear: our faithfulness to Christ is essential for our faith. So essential in fact that some languages use the same word for both "faith" and "faithfulness" in the New Testament.

In this mind and spirit, I wish you strong faith in the year 2018. Let us remain faithful and true to the Lord!

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3 January 2018