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Guest of Honour

Message for New Wine Ministries' "Sing for Joy" Charity Gala Dinner

I have known the Siu family for decades ever since my role as Director-General of Social Welfare in Hong Kong from 1996-2000. When I was asked to write a message for the New Wine Ministries founded by Reverend Noreen Siu Richards, I accepted the honour with admiration and elation.

Admiration because beneath the veneer of Hong Kong's glamour and wealth, Reverend Siu feels the need to offer help to two of the community's most hapless groups – cancer patients and asylum seekers and refugees. They are those who struggle every day in the depth of suffering and despair. What The New Wine Ministries give them is far more important than material sustenance. It's the ability to see hope when the situation seems hopeless, the chance to feel love and care as life seems to hang in a balance, and super-human courage to embrace their lot that comes from the heart and the soul.

I also feel elation in writing this message. The elation of partaking in this most noble of human endeavour, that of giving, sharing and compassion, and that, to quote an ancient Franciscan prayer, of being an instrument of God's peace, trying to sow "where there is doubt, faith; where is despair, hope; where is darkness, light; and where is sadness, joy."

So in this "Sing for Joy" Charity Night Dinner, I urge everyone present to join hands with Reverend Siu in our respective mission in life – to act out our own Psalm of Life by lending a helping hand to our forlorn and shipwrecked brothers and sisters, so that they as much as we, can truly say, along with Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-82) -

*Tell me not, in mournful numbers,
Life is but an empty dream!
For the soul is dead that slumbers,
And things are not what they seem.*

*Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Is not spoken of the soul."*

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