



## **2018 Opening Mass for Santa Maria College**

### **HOMILY**

**By the Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB  
Archbishop of Perth**

**Santa Maria College, Stoneham Road, Attadale  
Tuesday 6 February 2018**

We are gathering here tonight in this beautiful setting, to ask for God's blessings on all that lies ahead in 2018 for the students, the staff and the families who together make up the Santa Maria College community.

In doing so we are also entrusting ourselves, and the year ahead, to God, expressing our firm faith that God will journey with us and, to the extent that we are open to his grace, make 2018 for each one of us a year of growth, of deep peace and joy, and of renewed hope. And in all of this we are giving expression to the motto of this College - *Soli Deo Gloria* - to God alone be glory. A school with a motto such as this, and indeed every Catholic school, will know and understand that a Catholic school without God very consciously at the heart of everything is a school which is failing to live up to its very reason for existing and, because of this, failing its students and their families.

My prayer for all of you this year is that together you can be a living expression of your school motto and that the glory of God, and the love which God pours out so freely and so fully on all of us, is experienced and shared by you all.

For every one of you, including those who have been part of this school community before, 2018 marks a new beginning. New beginnings are always exciting, full of promise, full of hope, but often also a little daunting. I imagine this is especially true for those of you who are new to the College, either as students, staff or parents, but I suspect that most of us, when something new begins, approach it with mixed feelings.

There are many ways of coping with the stress and uncertainty of new beginnings and I am very confident that your school has many things in place to make it as easy and as enjoyable as possible for you. As a Catholic school, of course, we know that in and through Jesus God is with us, that he walks with us, and that what we might find difficult or impossible to cope with, either as individuals or even as a community, we will be able to manage as long as we stay united with him. And so, at the start of this new school year, I want to encourage you all to begin the year with a sense of hope, with a sense of excitement, and with a strong sense of the presence of the Lord with you.

As the new school year does get underway we find ourselves here in Perth, and throughout Australia, celebrating the Year of Youth. This is an initiative of the Australian Catholic Bishops who wanted to mark the tenth anniversary of the World Youth Day held in Sydney in 2008. It also



corresponds with the decision of Pope Francis to call for a special Synod, or meeting, of the world's bishops, in October of this year in Rome, to reflect on what the Lord is calling the Church to do and be for young people at this time in our history.

When Pope Francis announced his decision to call for a Synod for Young People, he explained that he wanted to help the Church accompany young people on their journey towards adulthood so that, through a process of discernment, young people could discover their plan for life and realise it with joy. It seems to me that for students this is a very good description of the role your school is meant to play in your life. Of course the school exists first and foremost to offer you the very best education possible. Using all its resources, your College will do all it can to provide you with committed and caring teachers and support staff, with the most up-to-date curricular, with the widest possible range of extra-curricular activities, with excellent facilities, and with a pastoral care program that is suited to your needs and helps you meet your goals. And the school will do all of this because it wants to help you as you journey towards adulthood, discover and develop a plan for your life, and live that plan, that dream, with enthusiasm, confidence and joy. I think it is fair to say that this is what your teachers want for you, it is the reason why your parents chose this school for you, and presumably it is what you most want from the school yourselves.

Your school, then, is all about life, your life, both as you live it now and as you hope to live it in the future. We might say that your school exists so that you can have life and have it to the full, both now and in the years ahead.

This of course is exactly the way Jesus once described his own mission, his own life's work. "*I have come*", he said to those listening to him "*so that you might have life and have it to the full*". This is why I said at the start of this homily that your school is, before all else, a community of people, students, staff and families together, who recognise the presence of the Lord Jesus among us. Everything the Church engages in, and this of course includes our schools, is geared towards this: to help people live the gift of life they have received from God with integrity, with enthusiasm, with hope and with joy, opening up their lives to the Lord who alone can really show us the way.

To live your life this way is in fact to bring to fulfillment exactly what your school motto proclaims. Many centuries ago when the Church was still young a famous bishop, Saint Irenaeus, wrote something that has been repeated ever since: *the glory of God is the human person fully alive*. To the teachers and all the staff therefore, I want to ask you to place the young people of this College at the heart of your work and of your professional lives. Help then to understand the beauty of the gift of the life God has given them.

Share your wisdom, and the wisdom of the Gospel and of the Church, with them so that they can learn how to make life-affirming decisions as they grow older. To the parents and families I want to ask you to stay engaged with your children, your daughters, during this time of formation and education so that the school can support you in every way possible as you accompany and guide them on their journey to adulthood. And to you, the students of this College, I want to ask you to be full of hope, open to everything the school can offer you, and ready to grow into young women whose lives really will give glory to God because you are living them to the full.

May God bless you all.