



Performing Arts Festival – Opening Mass 2018

Homily

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**Infant Jesus Morley Parish
47 Wellington Road, Morley**

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I want to begin these few words of reflection this morning, by putting to you all a question which Saint Paul once put to the community of Christians who lived in a city called Corinth, which was west of the city of Athens in present day Greece. In those days, two thousand years ago, Corinth was part of the Roman Empire and was a city in which people from all over the world and of every race, nation and religion lived together, sometimes in harmony and sometimes not. Christians were a tiny minority in the city but because they had received the wonderful gift of faith in Jesus they regarded themselves as privileged and special – and indeed they were. To have been given the gift of faith, as so many of us here in the Church this morning have, really is a special and precious gift for which we should always be grateful. Sometimes we take it for granted, and forget how fortunate we are, so it is good for us from time to time to remember just how blessed we are. This is why Saint Paul, when writing to the Christians in Corinth, put this question to them: *What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?* (1 Cor 4:7).

From time to time, when I am speaking to young people preparing for their Confirmation, I remind them that to have been given the gift of faith is to have been specially chosen by the Lord. After all, not everyone has this gift and for that reason we might ask ourselves: *why me?* Why, out of all the people God could have chosen, did he choose me? Could it be that I am better than everyone else and that I deserve this special gift because I have earned it? Could it be that God likes me more than other people and for that reason I have been given this gift because I am one of God's favourites?

Obviously neither of these explanations makes much sense. God does not have favourites. God does not like some people more than others. God created each of us in love and God continues to sustain us in love. The only reason then that I can think of to explain why we have been given the gift of faith is because God, for his own mysterious reasons, has decided that he wants to come into the lives of other people through us. God has let us into the secret of his love so that we can then share that secret with others – by what we say, of course, but also and more importantly by what we do.



As Christians, we believe that everything we have comes to us as a gift from God and that God's gifts are given to us not just for ourselves but so that we can share them with others. In doing so, of course, we are not just sharing our gifts; we are also inviting people to admire those gifts and, in doing so, admire the one who gives the gifts. This is what Saint Paul is reminding us of when he says to the Christians in Corinth, but also to us: *What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?* The gifts God gives us should not be a source of selfish pride for us, but rather a source of deep gratitude that through us, as we use and cooperate with God's gifts, other people are able to experience the creativity, and generosity and beauty of God.

This opening Mass is the beginning of another time of gratitude and wonder here in our archdiocese as we celebrate all the ways in which every single one of us is, in his or her own unique way, a living sign and expression of the creativity and boundless goodness of God. While we certainly want to thank all those people who make this annual Performing Arts Festival possible, and while we must thank all those who are willing to use their gifts to entertain, delight and amaze others, most of all we want to thank God without whom there is no life, no joy, no creativity, and no hope. Among all the many gifts and talents each one of us has been given, today and throughout the festival we want to be conscious of the most basic and beautiful gift of all - the gift of life - and the gift of faith which helps us to remember where our life comes from, how precious it is, and how wonderful it is to share it with others.

May the God of life bless our festival this year and lead us all into a deeper sense of gratitude for all that God does for us for, after all, what do we have that we did not receive and why then would we boast as though our talents and abilities are of our own making rather than precious gifts coming from the hand of our loving God?