



**14th Sunday of Ordinary Time**

**2018 Veritas Youth Festival**

**Homily**

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

Bateman Parish, St Thomas More Church  
Sunday 8 July, 2018

As most of you know, each Sunday when we celebrate Mass together, we listen to three readings from the Bible. The first usually comes from the Old Testament and the third reading always comes from the Gospel. We also have a second reading which nearly always comes from the New Testament and more often than not from the letters of Saint Paul.

If you listen to the readings carefully you will realise that the first reading and the gospel on Sundays are always linked to each other. The reason for this, of course, is that for us as Christians, the Old Testament tells the story of the ways in which God gradually prepared his people for the coming of the messiah, of Jesus. Today for example the Old Testament reading talks about the ways in which God sent his prophets to call the people back to him and about the fact that no matter how often his people refused to listen God did not give up. The Gospel reading picks up the same theme showing that when God finally did send his own Son people still refused to listen and to respond – and yet Jesus did not give up on his disciples or on people generally but kept on encouraging them to live lives worthy of the God who gave them their lives in the first place.

The second reading today, as is the case on most Sundays, stands alone in the sense that it hasn't necessarily been chosen to fit in with the other two readings. Because this is nearly always the case, the second reading can sometimes get neglected in the homilies that priests and bishops preach at Mass. This is a pity, because often the second reading contains very practical, down to earth, advice which can help us make sense of what it means to try and live as disciples of Jesus in our day to day lives.

I think this is particularly true of today's second reading. I also think that this reading, from one of Saint Paul's letters, has something special to say to young people who are either trying to work out what their place in the Church might be, or trying to discover how they can become more involved and committed than they already are.

It seems to me, and you can tell me later if I am right or wrong, that most young people, most of you, when you are at your best, are full of idealism, hope and enthusiasm and are ready to commit the energy you have to making the very best of the life you have been given. This is certainly my experience when I visit our secondary schools and meet the school leaders, or go to Notre Dame, or talk to the young teachers in our schools, or see how generous you are in getting involved in social outreach programs, or being available to help when people are in need. You bring all these gifts to the Church



and in doing that you remind the rest of us in the Church of just how important hope, and enthusiasm, and ideals and generosity really are for all of us. This is why the Church can never fully be the Church the Lord wants it to be if you aren't there. Maybe the rest of us do not always show it but we really need you and we love it when we see you with us, as we do today.

Of course, young people are not always at their best any more than anyone else is. You are not always at your best. I do not say that as a criticism – it is just the reality. When we are not at our best our optimism can disappear in a cloud of unhappiness and dissatisfaction. Our energy can get eaten up by laziness and lethargy. Our generosity can get swamped by selfishness. And worst of all, our idealism can get compromised by discouragement and a sense of hopelessness. Sometimes this can be caused by external circumstances – a difficult situation at home for example or trouble finding a job – and sometimes it can come from within. We might be battling with a sense of failure, or upset by difficulties in relationships which are important to us, or depressed by our realisation that we just do not seem to have what we need in order to achieve what we want.

What Saint Paul does in today's second reading is to make the radical suggestion that these difficulties, very real and very painful though they are, might just be the way in which God is trying to find a way into our lives and into our hearts so that, instead of just relying on ourselves we might start to rely on him. Saint Paul talks about what he calls "a thorn in the flesh", something that he has begged God many times to take away from him, but something which he has come to understand is the very thing that keeps on reminding him of how much he needs God if his life is going to be all that it can be. Paul does not tell us what this "thorn in the flesh" is but he does tell us, because he has experienced it in his own life, that it is precisely in our weakness, in our particular "thorn in the flesh", that God's power has a chance to shine. This does not mean that I can become an astrophysicist if God has not given me the kind of intelligence that grasps complex mathematics. It does not mean that I can be a vet if I am absolutely terrified of animals. And it does not mean that I can help Australia win the World Cup next time if I have two left feet and keep falling over myself on the soccer field. What it does mean is that I will be absolutely able to do everything I need to be able to do to live the life that God wants me to live as long as I let God into my life and let God help me do, with him, what I cannot do on my own.

This is precisely what the Church exists to do. It exists to help us let God into our lives and to help us keep God in our lives. It is precisely what our Veritas Festival has been designed to help us all with. It is precisely what we can help each other to achieve, if we stick with the Church, helping it, simply by our presence within it, to be the Church that God wants it to be. Next year it will be exactly what the Australian Catholic Youth Festival, being held here in Perth in late November, will be all about. I hope you will all help us to make it happen. And maybe as we bring our festival to a close we can borrow another thought from Saint Paul who once said, "I can do all things in Christ who gives me the strength". *Lord, as we go from here today be with us and help us to do and to be what we cannot do or be on our own, but can hope to do and be in you who give us the strength. Amen.*