



Mater Dei College 25th Anniversary Mass

HOMILY

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

**Mater Dei College
107 Treetop Avenue, Edgewater
Friday 23 March 2018**

As I said at the start of Mass this morning, anniversaries are always important but some are especially significant and a silver anniversary, a twenty-fifth anniversary, is one of these special ones. I am really glad to be here and to have the chance to celebrate with you.

Certainly for all of you who are students here at the College, 25 years must seem like a long time. None of you were born when the College first opened, and that is possibly true for some of your teachers as well. For older people like me twenty-five years doesn't seem that long ago: I for example had already been a priest for seven years when the College was opened. But for all of us, students, staff and people like me who are very grateful that this great school is here in this part of Perth, it is good to look back with gratitude and admiration for all that has been achieved so far, to look around us with pride at the way in which Mater Dei College today is such a great example of what a really good Catholic school looks like, and to look forward with hope and expectation as we work towards making sure that the school grows and continues to build on the great tradition which has developed over the last twenty-five years.

What does a really good Catholic school look like? Well, first of all it has to be a really good school. Some people think that this means the school has to have great facilities, great resources and a wide-ranging curriculum. These things are all important of course and your school already has lots of these things and will continue to develop more of them in the future. But even more importantly a really good school is a place where you, the students, come first. A really good school is a place where your teachers and all the other people who work in the school dedicate themselves to you, care about you, and do the very best they can for you. From all that I have heard about Mater Dei my impression is that this is exactly what your school is like.

But Mater Dei isn't just meant to be a really good school: it is meant to be a really good Catholic school. Catholic schools aren't necessarily better than other schools but they are different. And why? Because Catholic schools are built around the firm conviction that God exists, that God came among us and made himself known to us in Jesus, and that Jesus created the Church as the way in which he wanted to be and intended to be with us as our guide and leader through life. We might say, then, that Catholic schools are places where young people can encounter Jesus and his Church and grow in their understanding of what life, God's fantastic gift of life, is meant to be all about.



As you all know we are now very close to Easter. This coming Sunday is Palm Sunday, the day when we remember the story of Jesus coming into Jerusalem for the last time. He was greeted by crowds of cheering fans who sang and danced around him as he rode through the streets on a donkey. We also remember though that many of those so-called fans would be screaming for his blood by the end of that week, on the day that we now call Good Friday. If Jesus does in fact help us to understand just what this fantastic gift of life which God has given us is all about, what this week will tell us is that the very best thing we can do with our lives is to make them a gift which enriches the lives of other people. Jesus, all through his life but especially in the last week of his life, gave absolutely everything he had and everything he was for others.

As Christians, we sum this up by saying that Jesus died on the cross for our salvation. Another way of saying the same thing is to say that Jesus came to show us, by what he said and by what he did, just how completely God loves us. And when it turned out that some people, inexplicably, hated him for this and decided to get rid of him, he wouldn't back down on what he believed about God, he wouldn't pretend that what he had been saying wasn't true, and he was ready to die rather than to let down the people God had sent him to save.

It is a strange thing, isn't it, to think that sometimes the best way to live fully the life God has given us is actually to let go of that life. Most of us won't have to do so to the extent that Jesus did. But if we are going to be followers of Jesus, and if we are going to be, like Jesus, the face of God the Father's mercy and love, then we will often find that we have to put others first and ourselves second. We will have to be more concerned about their needs than our own. We will have to let the selfish part of us die so that the better part of us, the generous part of us, the really courageous part of us, can live and grow.

You are all aware that the land on which your College stands was donated by the Sisters of Mercy. You may also know that the Mercy Sisters represented the face of the Church in these northern suburbs of Perth for many years. You therefore all know exactly what I am talking about when I talk about mercy. You know what it means to look around you, recognise when people are lonely, or hurting, or struggling in some way, and make up your minds to do something practical about it. This is an essential part of what a good Catholic school looks like, and Mater Dei College has been doing this for twenty-five years. That is what we are really celebrating today, what we are grateful for and what we want to commit ourselves to passing on to those who will be a part of Mater Dei College into the future.

So today, and especially during this Mass, let us pray together that the story of Mater Dei College so far, a story of mercy, compassion, generosity and trusting faith in God will continue to be the story of this College into the future and let's make up our minds to be an active part of this continuing story in whatever way we can.