



**Rite of Dedication and Consecration of the Church and Altar
Little Sisters of the Poor, Glendalough**

Homily

**Most Rev Timothy Costeloe SDB
Archbishop of Perth**

**Saturday 31 August 2019
Little Sisters of the Poor, Glendalough**

Jesus is waiting for you in the chapel. Go and find him when your strength and patience are giving out, when you feel lonely and helpless. Say to him, "You know well what it happening, my dear Jesus. I have only you. Come to my aid ..." And then go your way. And don't worry about knowing how you are going to manage. It is enough to have told our good Lord. He has an excellent memory.

These simple and beautiful words of Saint Jeanne Jugan can guide us this morning as we try to understand just what it is we are doing today. In dedicating this beautiful chapel, this place where Jesus waits for us, and in consecrating this altar, on which we celebrate the memorial of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus, we are both in words and in actions witnessing that the Lord Jesus, the Word of God made flesh for us, is at the heart of everything we are as a community of disciples and of everything we seek to do in his name.

We began our celebration by recalling our baptism. On that momentous day, so long ago for so many of us here, we were reborn by being plunged into the waters of the font just as Jesus was plunged into the darkness of death, but the water flowed over us and ran off us and we emerged renewed and purified, just as Jesus emerged from the tomb to the fullness of life in his resurrection, the new life he shares with us. And so, united now with Christ, we began our journey of faith: we were, as Saint Jeanne Jugan reminds us, "*grafted into the cross of Christ*" and our journey of faith was and still is a journey with our merciful, compassionate, suffering Lord towards the fullness of life.

We then listened to the reading of the Word of God, through which the true Word of God, Jesus himself, speaks to us. Today, as every day, he reveals himself to be our Way, our Truth and our Life. Today especially we hear our Way, our Truth and our Life, say to us, "*You must worship God in Spirit and in Truth*". As Christians, men and women of faith, we are called to worship God not with words alone, which may never get beyond our lips or our minds to our heart, but with our whole selves, with our lives. Worship is ultimately empty if it is not an act of faith, and in our Christian understanding, faith is not only what we believe in our minds, important though this is:



faith is also the measure of trust we carry in our hearts. St Jeanne Jugan understood this very well. In words that we might perhaps find very confronting she insists that, *“It is good to be poor, to have nothing, to depend on God for everything”*.

How do we explain the faithful dedication of women like the Little Sisters of the Poor, or the generous people who support them in their work and often work beside them, if it is not because of their trusting faith? How else do we make sense of the commitment of so many priests and religious, some of whom are with us this morning, who have lived lives, and still do, of extraordinary generosity and selflessness? How else do we understand what sustains the countless numbers of faithful Christians, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, who put the needs of their families before their own, or those many other people who put their lives totally at the service of others? These are all people, and hopefully we are numbered among them, who in spite of difficulties, challenges, moments of doubt and experiences of failure, continue to have trusting faith in the one who proclaims himself as our Way, our Truth and our Life. Like Saint Jeanne Jugan, we are trying to take him at his word, and live each day accordingly.

In a few moments we will begin that part of today's beautiful ceremony during which we consecrate the altar and the walls of this chapel. It is on this altar that the sacrifice of our redemption will become present to us in the broken body and spilt blood of Jesus. Once again we will hear the words, *“This is my body given up for you. This is my blood poured out for you”*. And we will take Jesus at his word. And then, again from the lips of Jesus, we will hear his call, *“Do this in memory of me” ... As I have given my life for you, and as you are united now with me in the Eucharist, go out and give your lives to each other and to the world. Celebrate the Eucharist here in this Chapel and upon this altar so that you can then be the Eucharist for my people. Nourish them as I nourish you. Care for them as I care for you.*

At the end of Holy Communion the Blessed Sacrament will be reserved in the tabernacle. We will be united with the Lord in Holy Communion, and we will go out to be the Eucharist, taking him with us and being the living signs that he seeks to continue to give himself to others through us. Of course, like the first disciples, and like every generation of disciples ever since, we will at times grow tired, our trusting faith might begin to waver, and our fidelity and commitment might grow weak and even fail. Then perhaps the Lord might prompt us to remember the words of Saint Jeanne Jugan with which I began these few reflections:

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