



**30th Anniversary Performing Arts Festival
Opening Mass**

Homily

**The Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB
Archbishop of Perth**

**St Mary's Cathedral, Perth
Thursday 25 July 2019**

On 16 July, 1969, when I was the same age as many of you gathered in the Cathedral this morning, I found myself sitting in a room with other students from my school, watching a small black and white television screen which was showing a live broadcast from the moon when the first human beings ever set foot on an extra-terrestrial body. Even today, fifty years later, I still find myself overawed by the extraordinary achievement of those first men who walked on the moon and all those people who contributed to this amazing event.

Three years later in 1972, the last moon landing took place. Since then no human beings have set foot on another world. Now, of course, there is serious talk of a landing on Mars during our lifetime.

Those of you who may have watched some of the commemorative television programs which have been on TV in recent days will, I think, be amazed at the primitive technology which was available fifty years ago and which was, in spite of its primitive nature, still capable of delivering this remarkable result. We have made a great deal of progress since those days. People tell us, for example, that there is now more computer power in the mobile phone many of you might have in your pocket than was available in the room full of computers which were used to bring about the successful moon landing.

Whether we are talking about the scientific brilliance of those people who were responsible for the moon landing, or about the creative brilliance which will be on display in this year's performing arts festival, the opening words of today's first reading can help us understand where our gratitude should be directed for the wonderful things human beings are able to accomplish. "We," Saint Paul tells us, "are only earthenware jars that hold this treasure to make it clear that such an overwhelming power comes from God and not from us."

When the three astronauts involved in the Apollo 11 mission were returning to earth after the historic landing on the moon one of them, Buzz Aldrin, quoted a verse from the Scriptures which we often hear at Mass: "*When I see the heavens, the work of your hands, and the moon and the stars which you arranged, who are we that you should keep us in mind, mere human beings that you care for us?*" Buzz Aldrin, like many of the astronauts who have been involved in the exploration of space during our lifetimes, was a person of faith who realised that even when humanity is at its very best and most creative, and perhaps especially when we are at our best and most creative we need to acknowledge that everything good about being a human person,



everything good about the world in which we live, and everything good about the universe of which we are a part, comes to us from God. The enormity of the universe and the unimaginable vastness of space only deepen our wonder at the mystery of God who is the source of it all.

One of the marks of a truly wise person is, I believe, his or her ability and willingness to express gratitude for all that they have and are and all that people do for them. All of us love receiving gifts and somehow we know instinctively that it is the right thing to do to say thank you for what we are given. Especially when we receive a gift we were not expecting, and which we feel we have done nothing to deserve or earn, we can be almost overcome by gratitude and experience within us a deep desire to express our gratitude in some concrete way. How much more then is it good for us to find ways of expressing our gratitude to God for all that God does for us.

It is this which explains why our annual Performing Arts Festival always begins with a celebration of the Eucharist. The very word Eucharist itself, which comes from the Greek language, means "*thanksgiving*". We give our time, our attention, and our talents to God during this Mass as a way of thanking God for giving us the gifts we have. We acknowledge, as today's first reading reminds us, that the overwhelming power, the overwhelming beauty, the overwhelming skill and creativity which will be on display during our festival, and which of course are in fact on display in the lives of each one of us every day, come from God and not from us.

My prayer for all of you who are involved in the performing arts festival this year is that the Lord will help you to recognise, in all that you do and all that you experience, the wonderful goodness, generosity and love of God. It was this love and goodness which brought you into being in the first place. It was this love and goodness that gave each of you the unique and special gifts which make you the people you are. It was and is this love and goodness which accompany you each day as you live out the wonderful gift of life which is God's most precious gift to you. The God who created the universe in all its wonder is the God who created you and made you the unique person you are. It is right that we should all show our gratitude to God for this by making the most of the gifts God has given us, and by rejoicing in the gifts God has given to others.