



**Third Sunday of Advent Year B
Cloverdale Parish 60th Anniversary**

Homily

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

**Saturday 12 December 2020
Notre Dame Church, Cloverdale Parish, Cloverdale**

As many of you would know, the whole Church in Australia is presently looking forward to the celebration of the Plenary Council in October next year. A plenary council is a meeting of all the bishops, together with other Church leaders and people from across our parishes, our schools and our many social welfare agencies, who all gather together to discuss what the Church can do moving into the future in order to be more fully the Church God is calling us to be. At the heart of our Plenary Council is the conviction that God speaks to us not just through bishops or clergy or Church leaders but through all members of the Church as together we seek to answer the question: what is God asking of us in Australia at this time?

Some of you will have been involved in the various groups which gathered together to respond to this question. More than 250,000 Catholics did respond and, when all of the responses were put together, six major themes emerged. Each one of them expresses a particular aspect of the mission of the Church here in Australia at this time and it is one of these that I wanted to share with you as your parish celebrates the Diamond Jubilee.

The theme about which I am speaking is in the form of a question: what does it mean to be a Christ-centred Church which is humble, healing and merciful?

For a parish community celebrating its 60th anniversary, this question is really an invitation to look back over the last 60 years with gratitude, to look around you at the present reality of this parish with both pride and hope, and to look forward with confidence as the parish moves into its future.

There is, of course, no perfect parish and there never will be. But tonight we are all being invited to thank God for the ways in which this parish community, made up of so many people over the last 60 years, has indeed been an example of a Church that first of all is centered on Christ. Our Catholic Church makes no sense if it is not very clearly and very deliberately centred on Christ. And, of course, that means that this parish makes no sense unless it is centred on Christ. As Catholics we take Jesus very seriously when he says to us: I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. We could, in fact, sum up the whole reason for the existence of this parish by saying that it is, or at least is meant to be, a parish community that helps each one of us to follow the way of



Jesus; to commit ourselves to being faithful to the truth proclaimed by Jesus; and to publically acknowledge that we draw our life not from our skills and talents and resources but from the Lord himself who gives himself to us in the Church, and especially in the Eucharist.

If any parish is to be, in reality, a Christ centered community, it must be a community who knows and loves Christ. It must, in other words, be a community which listens to the Word of God and puts that Word into practice. This, of course, is exactly what Jesus says about his own mother to whom this parish is dedicated. She is the one who is blessed because she listened to the Word of God and put it into practice. In Mary you have a wonderful example to follow and you have a woman whose prayers accompany you each day along your journey of life and faith.

As we come to know Jesus by listening to the Word of God, and especially to the Gospels, we realise that the Plenary Council theme about which I am speaking describes Jesus perfectly. He was a truly humble man. Saint Paul tells us that even though he was in the form of God he humbled himself, became one of us, and even submitted to death on the cross. One way of describing a humble person is to say that he or she recognises that life is not meant to be consumed by putting yourself first but rather is all about putting yourself at the service of others. Tonight we can thank God for all those countless people who over the past 60 years as members of this parish have lived a life of humility, putting themselves at the service of their brothers and sisters. We can also thank God for all those people who support Father Michael in ensuring that this parish continues to be a parish which reaches out to those in need and cares for those in trouble. And perhaps most importantly of all you, the members of this parish, can tonight re-commit yourselves to continuing and strengthening the spirit of humble and generous service as your parish continues to move into the future.

The Gospels also show us that Jesus was a great healer. This is why we, his disciples, need to form a community which brings healing to those who are broken. We may not be able to work the healing miracles which Jesus did but we can allow Jesus to work through us to bring peace to troubled hearts, forgiveness to those who have hurt or betrayed us, hope to those who have lost hope, comfort to those who are bereaved, and companionship to those who are lonely. It is in these ways, and many others, that Jesus seeks to continue his ministry of healing through us. Again, as we thank God for the healers from the past and in the present in this community we can re-commit ourselves to being true bearers of healing and hope for others as we move into the future.

And, lastly, the Gospels show us that Jesus was merciful. Indeed, Pope Francis has described Jesus as the face of the Father's mercy. When I speak to young people about the mercy of Jesus I use the word large-hearted to try and help them understand. Being large-hearted is the very opposite of being mean-spirited. Being merciful is the very opposite of being condemnatory or unforgiving. This is the kind of Christian community the Lord is calling us to be: the kind of Christian community the Lord is calling this parish to be. And, of course, you are not starting from



scratch. Today, as you celebrate your Diamond Jubilee, you know that you can build on the solid foundations laid over the last 60 years.

Your parish is dedicated to Mary and in a special way you are both under her protection and can look to her for guidance and example. Mary's humility comes through in that beautiful hymn she sings when she visits her cousin Elizabeth. "The Lord who is mighty has done great things for me," she says, "and holy is his name". Under the title of *Our Lady of Lourdes* among many other titles Mary is honoured in the Church as the one whose prayers bring healing and hope to the afflicted. And, of course, one of the most well-known of Mary's titles is *Mother of Mercy*. You can be confident that Mary's prayers have accompanied the members of this parish community over the last 60 years. You can be certain that her prayers continue to support your parish community today. And you can have trusting faith that Mary's prayers will continue to be with the members of this parish community as together you move into the future creating, through God's grace, a community that really is humble, healing and merciful, and truly centred on Christ.