



**Feast of the Ascension
Consecration of the Church of Saint Teresa of Calcutta, Baldivis**

Homily

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

**Sunday 16 May, 2021
Mother Teresa Catholic Church, Baldivis**

“You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church.”

These words, which are very familiar to all of us, come from the gospel of Saint Matthew, and remind us of a very important truth which today, as we consecrate this new church dedicated to Mother Teresa, we are invited to remember and allow to enter deeply into our minds and hearts. The Church which originates in the group of disciples whom Jesus gathered around him, with Peter as their leader, and to which Jesus gave the gift of his Holy Spirit at Pentecost, that Church, his Church, which continues today and of which we are all a part, is first and foremost a community of people called together by the Lord. This is very important because, while today we celebrate the consecration of this building, and thank God for all those who have contributed to it, we are called to remember that it is not buildings, however beautiful they are, which are the heart and soul of the Church: rather it is the people, the community whom God has called and gathered together, who are the Church. As Pope John Paul II was so fond of saying, the Church is best understood as the community of the disciples of Christ. It seems to me, then, that as we consecrate this beautiful building today what we are really doing is asking God to use this building, and all that will happen within its walls, to form all those who come here into a true community of disciples.

Saint Paul reminds us of this in one of his letters when, speaking to the Christian community in Corinth, he says to them very plainly:

You are God’s building.

And he then goes on to say:

Didn’t you realize that you were God’s temple and that the Spirit of God was living among you?

This afternoon I would like to say the very same words to everyone gathered here in this Church: You are God’s building. So never forget that you are God’s Temple and that God’s Spirit lives



among you. As you leave the Church this afternoon I hope you will carry this thought with you, and allow it to enter deeply into your hearts. This is who you are. This is what God has called you for. This is your vocation and it can be for you a source of deep peace.

In saying all of this, of course, I do not want to minimize the importance of this beautiful church. Nor do I want to diminish in any way the joy or pride you rightly feel in this wonderful accomplishment. I simply want to remind all of us that this church building exists to serve a very important and powerful purpose: to draw all people who come here into a deep and life-changing encounter with God and to draw all people who come here into a deep communion with each other, so that together, rather than as isolated individuals, we can be a living sign to our world that God is present among us and that his presence transforms lives and offers the gift of joy, of hope and of deep peace.

The building up of such a community is the work of everyone, just as the bringing to completion of this beautiful building has been the work of everyone. In both cases the Lord gives us the gift of the ordained ministry, the gift of our priests and deacons, who under the leadership of the local bishop, guide the community so that in every way the community can be an expression of God's presence among his people. Fr Geoff has guided this project to its completion and we are deeply grateful to him for that. And, of course, we are all deeply conscious that Fr Geoff has not done this on his own. This whole project has been very much the work of the whole community led by a very dedicated group of parishioners who have worked alongside Fr Geoff.

But Fr Geoff has not simply been the leader of a building project. He has also been the leader of a parish which seeks to be a community of faith and of true discipleship. A priest's vocation calls him to do so in a spirit of humble service, never seeking to dominate or dictate but always seeking to listen to, and respond to, the Spirit of God. But it is the whole community, and not just the priests and deacons, who are gathered together by God to be the signs and bearers of Christ's presence and love among us. Every single one of us, simply because of our baptism, has been chosen and sent by God to bring the love of Christ and the truth of the gospel to others. This new church building exists, and all the parish structures which in a sense will draw their energy from this church exist, for this one purpose: to enable you, God's people, to be a credible and effective sign of the love of Christ at work in the world.

All the sacraments which will be celebrated here, all the silent prayers which will be offered here, all the tears which will be shed here, all the joy which will be shared here, will only have meaning if we understand who we are as the people of God, who we are as the community of the disciples of Jesus, and what it is that God is asking of us. In the end, in other words, everything that will be a part of the life of this church building, and of the parish it is built to serve, will only make sense if Jesus is the heart and soul of this building, of this community of faith, and of our Church. As Saint Paul reminds us nobody can lay any other foundation than the one which has already been laid, that is Jesus Christ.



This, then, is my prayer for you and my plea to you on this very important day in the story of your parish. In whatever you do, have Jesus deliberately, consciously and clearly at the heart of it all. As a community of faith you are dedicated to a woman whose whole life was centred on Christ. May you all, like Mother Teresa, really be the face of the merciful Lord Jesus to each other, to your local area, to our city, and to the world in which we live.