



Requiem Mass for Sr Emmanuel Crocetti PBVM

Homily

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

**Wednesday 20 December, 2023
Mater Christi Church, Yangebup**

Some years ago, I had the privilege of celebrating a Nuptial Mass for one of my past pupils who had kept in touch with me after leaving school and who had introduced me on various occasions to his fiancé. Both of these young people were people of deep faith, and they entered very deliberately into the preparations for their wedding. When it came to choosing the readings, they chose a gospel passage which I had never heard used for a wedding Mass before. It was the parable of Jesus about sensible people who build their houses on solid rock and foolish people who build their houses on shifting sands.

As we gather here this afternoon to celebrate this Requiem Mass for Sister Emmanuel, we do so primarily to entrust her to the extraordinary and overwhelming mercy, compassion, and faithfulness of God. And we do this with great confidence because any of us who have known Sister Emmanuel know that she built the house of her life on solid rock; her life was built on the rock of family, of faith and of fidelity.

Sister Emmanuel was one of four children: she had one brother and two sisters. Her brother, Gaetano, became a priest and Emmanuel, together with her two sisters, joined the Presentation Sisters. Fr Gaetano died many years ago and Sister Immacolata died just a few years ago. Sr Maria, who is with us today, is now retired and living at Margaret Hubery House. It does not take too much imagination to appreciate how deep the faith of Sister Emmanuel's parents must have been for them to have sown the seeds of these vocations in their four children. It was a faith that was born and nourished in the rich traditions of Italian Catholicism, traditions which have now taken root in Australia, and which continue to contribute so much to our Catholic community and our national life.

For Sister Emmanuel, it was the bringing together of her Italian Catholic heritage and the richness of the charism of Nano Nagle, the founder of the Presentation Sisters, which formed the solid rock of faith upon which she built her life of fidelity. The image of Nano Nagle in the school grounds at Iona captures the heart of that charism very well. Nano is shown holding the hand of a young girl as she strides along while in her other hand, she holds up high a lantern. It is a symbol of what lies at the centre of the life and ministry of the sisters: to carry the light of faith into the darkness of people's lives, in this way becoming signs and bearers of God's compassion, tenderness, love and care for all, and especially those most in need.



Every one of us here in the church today will have our own stories to tell of the ways in which we have been touched by this compassion and tenderness through the presence of Sister Emmanuel in our lives. That is certainly the case for me, and I am sure it is the case also for so many of you.

This is especially true of Sister Emmanuel's time in the parish and the school at Yangebup as so many of you here today, and those who gathered for Mass in Yangebup last night, would know. It is for this reason that, while we are here first and foremost to pray for Sister Emmanuel as she passes through the gates of death into the great mystery and wonder of eternal life with the Lord, we are also here to offer our thanks to God for the special gift which Sister Emmanuel has been for each one of us.

In Saint Paul's letter to the Philippians, his final advice to them is something I think we might also imagine Sister Emmanuel saying to us. She would not have said it while she was still with us – she would have thought it presumptuous - and I can imagine her being rather cross with me for saying it now, but I think the Lord would be happy for me to go ahead as we gather here today.

Perhaps you might let yourselves hear, in your minds and hearts, Sister Emmanuel's voice as I read these words:

I want you to be happy, always happy in the Lord.....let your tolerance be evident to everyone..... there is no need to worry, but if there is anything you need, pray for it, asking God for it with prayer and thanksgiving ... fill your minds with everything that is true, everything that is noble, everything that is good and pure, everything that we love and honour, everything that can be thought virtuous or worthy of praise. Keep doing all the things that you have learned from me, have been taught by me, and have heard or seen that I do. Then the God of peace will be with you.

In just a few days' time we will celebrate once again the birth of the one we call the Prince of Peace. We will remember that the mighty God and Lord of all chose to come among us as one of us, as a helpless, fragile baby who would grow into a man who lived a life of simplicity and made of his whole life a gift for others. He proclaimed himself to be the Way, and the Truth, and the Life, and he promised us the gift of peace. If we wonder sometimes why this peace promised by the Lord seems so hard to come by, we might allow our memories of Sister Emmanuel to remind us that the way we choose to live our lives, and the values we choose to guide our actions, and the grace of God we call upon to help us to remain faithful, are the keys which will open our hearts to this peace which only the Lord can give.

We pray for Sister Emmanuel today as we entrust her in faith and hope to the God who called her into life, who called her into the Presentation Sisters, who called her to make her own life a gift for the life of others here in our part of the world, and who has now called her home. Eternal rest give to her, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon her. May she rest in peace and rise in joy.