



Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB, Archbishop of Perth
LifeLink Launch – 2014: Irene McCormack College, 18 Bradman Drive, Butler
Friday 23 May 2014

Good morning everyone and thank you for the very warm welcome you have given to Bishop Sproxtton and me. I am sure I speak for Bishop Sproxtton as well when I say how happy we are to be here and how much we have been looking forward to this visit.

We are here of course to launch LikeLink 2014 for the whole Archdiocese of Perth, and so in greeting all of you gathered here in the auditorium this morning I also want to welcome everyone else who may be watching this in your own schools from one corner of the Archdiocese to the other. I know that Irene McCormack College has gone to a lot of trouble to prepare a special programme for us all today and I hope you all enjoy it.

On your behalf I would like to thank Mrs Debra Sayce, the Director of Religious Education in the Archdiocese for her thoughtful and challenging words, and also Bishop Sproxtton for explaining so well for us the way in which LikeLink works and the kinds of situations it seeks to address.

I am sure you all know this already but I think it is worth highlighting nonetheless that you can't be a Christian, or at least not a very serious one, if you don't have a heart for those who are in difficulty and need a helping hand.

I say this because, to be a Christian is to be a follower of Jesus Christ, and you can't really say you are following him if you ignore what he said and what he did. I feel confident in saying this to all of you here in the auditorium and all of you watching from your own schools, because you are all students at Catholic schools.

This means that your school is grounded in the teachings of Jesus and is trying to help everyone connected with the school to understand him as much as you can and respond to him as generously and courageously as you can. Some of you will have already made a serious commitment to him and to his Church, others among you might still be making up your minds, and some of you might not be too interested at all.

But to all of you I want to throw out this challenge: open your minds and your hearts, even more than you have already, to this man who once shook the world up by what he said and by what he did and who wants to shake our world up today, by what you say and by what you do. We live in a great country and both Perth as a city and Western Australia as a state are great places to be. But when you begin to scratch the surface of our society, and maybe even the surface of your school and your circle of friends and your family, you can quickly begin to see that not everything is as good as we would like it to be, not just for ourselves but for others as well.

I am quite sure that there are some and maybe many lonely and unhappy people in your school community. I am sure too that there will be times when some of your friends are going through a tough patch and need someone to turn to. In your families there will be moments of struggle, misunderstanding, and sadness. And of course in your own life, from time to time, you will have to confront difficulties, disappointments, even failure. I hope at such times you will find, in your families and among your friends, in your school and in your parish, people you can turn to and people who can help.

Underpinning the whole programme of LifeLink is the idea that, as disciples of Jesus, we are meant, even when life is tough for us, to be the ones who reach out to others. While LifeLink itself is focussed on raising money so that the Catholic community in WA is in a position to offer practical help to those in need, its success depends on whether or not the members of the Catholic community are really tuned in to the message of Jesus – it depends on whether or not you as individuals and as school communities, are really tuned into the message of Jesus.

Let me mention just briefly one of the stories Jesus told his followers to give you an idea of what I mean by this. The story is about a poor man, Lazarus, who sits each day outside the gate of a rich man who lives in a large house and who has good food, good wine and lots of servants to look after him. Whenever the rich man went out the poor beggar, Lazarus, was hoping to receive something from him: a little food, perhaps some money to buy a meal, maybe just even a kind word. But the rich man didn't even notice that Lazarus was there. Jesus doesn't tell us that the rich man was vicious, or dishonest, or cruel. He tells us that the rich man was simply so wrapped up in himself, and intent on enjoying his good life, that he didn't even notice the poor man sitting at his gate. And for this Jesus was very critical of the rich man. In the story, which remember is only a story, not a piece of history, the rich man ends up in hell while the poor man ends up in heaven.



Do you know what was wrong with the rich man? He had eye trouble, and ear trouble and heart problems. He didn't have eyes that could see the person in need; he didn't have ears that were tuned in to the cries of the one who was suffering; he didn't have a heart that either wanted to, or knew how to show love and compassion. He wasn't a bad, evil man. He was simply an insensitive, self-obsessed man – and for that he failed the basic test of humanity, which is also one of the basic tests of a Christian.

Am I closed in on myself, focussed on my own needs, intent on organising my life to suit my own wishes, or do I have a heart that can really feel for others and will drive me to do something for them.

One of my hopes for LifeLink, especially in our Catholic schools, is that it will provide an opportunity for everyone in the school community, from the students to the staff to the parents, to get a health check-up. How are my eyes? Can they see the needs of others? How are my ears? Can they pick up on the cries, not always easily heard, of those who are suffering? And most importantly, how is my heart? Does it beat strongly enough to push me out of my comfort zone and, unlike the rich man in the gospel story, actually do something practical to help, because deep down I know it is what I should do, and deep down, where my best self can be found, I really want to?

To all of you then who are here in the auditorium this morning and those who are watching this on video I want to say that my special prayer for you is a prayer that comes from the Old Testament, where we ask God to give us a new heart and to put a new spirit in us. May God do that for each one of you so that a spirit of generosity, and enthusiasm, and I hope too a spirit of good fun and excitement, will be at the centre of everything you do to raise money for LifeLink this year, and that you will each find that your hearts are beating strongly as you begin to plan your fund-raising activities and as you throw yourselves completely into those activities throughout the year.

This was certainly the case last year where so many school communities really worked together to raise an extraordinary amount of money, all of which has been put to good use in reaching out to those in need over the course of this year. I really do want to take this opportunity to thank all those schools who contributed so generously last year.

At last year's launch I was able to announce the winner's of the Archbishop's Spirit Award and I am now about to do the same thing again. Last year in fact there were two winners and this year it has happened again. It's not because two schools raised the same amount of money. In fact the Spirit Award is not given on the basis of the amount of money raised but on the spirit, that is the commitment and enthusiasm and generosity, with which the school community went about taking up the LifeLink challenge.

So it gives me great pleasure and pride to be able to announce that the first of the two recipients of the Archbishop's Spirit Award this year is

Prendiville Catholic College. Let's give them a big round of applause. The College has been an enthusiastic supporter of LifeLink since its early days and really go out of their ways to involve as many of the students as possible in the various activities they sponsor. Last year they were able to raise \$10,000 – a fantastic effort. Well done.

The second of the two recipients this year is – wait for it –

Irene McCormack Catholic College. Let me assure you that it is not because you are hosting this year's launch that you have won this award. It is because you have really committed yourself as a College to this task under the leadership of your Principal, your Deputy Principal and your Director of Ministry.

I want to thank them of course, but I also want to thank everyone of you here because you took up the challenge they put to you and you raised just on \$5,000. The amount of money matters, but the spirit which took hold of the College matters much more. So thank you, and keep it up.

I suspect I many have spoken a little longer than I should have but this is such an important moment and I wanted you all to know how grateful I am to every school which has contributed to LifeLink in the past and to encourage you all to keep up your efforts so that there will be no more Lazaruses sitting at our gates, desperately hoping for help as we walk past ignoring them.

Thank you.