



Legion of Mary – Annual Mass - Homily

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St Joachim's Church, Victoria Park
Saturday, 8 November 2014

When I was installed as the new Archbishop of Perth in 2012, the whole Church in Australia was caught up in the Year of Grace. You might remember that the bishops of Australia had asked all of us to once again place Jesus very deliberately and very consciously at the heart of everything we were doing as individual Catholics and as a Church. The two main messages we used, which came to us from the writings of Blessed Pope John Paul 11, were firstly, "start afresh from Christ" and, secondly, "contemplate the face of Christ".

At the time of my installation, I referred to the challenge of the Superior General of the Salesian Order, to which I belong, when he said, with reference to the Religious Life in the Church, that the greatest challenge facing us today was to return the religious life to Christ and to return Christ to the religious life. I said then, and I want to repeat it now, that the greatest challenge facing the Church today, the greatest challenge facing our Archdiocese today, and the greatest challenge facing the Legion of Mary here in our Archdiocese, is precisely this: is Christ really at the heart of our lives, of our plans, of our projects? Is He at the heart of our prayer and at the heart of our outreach to others? Do we, in other words, really believe that He, and only He, is the Way, the Truth and the Life?

I think this is the question which Mary herself would ask us as we gather here in St Joachim's, the church dedicated to her father, to celebrate the Annual Mass for the Legion of Mary in her honour. It is the question which stands behind her call to the stewards in tonight's Gospel reading, and to us, to "do whatever he tells you".

Mary could only say this to the stewards, and she only says it today to us, because of her complete trust in the Word of God. The Gospel story itself is puzzling. Jesus seems to speak rather harshly to Mary, dismissing her concerns for the young bridal couple. "What has this to do with you or with me?" he says to her. "My time has not yet come." And yet Mary is not discouraged or affronted by this. She knows her son better than we do. She knows that something greater than her own understanding of the situation is at stake. She knows her son too well to believe that He is treating her disrespectfully or ignoring her. She knows that the hour of Jesus, the time for His true identity to be revealed, is not hers to determine. But she knows, too, of His compassion, His sensitivity, His deep and practical concern for others, and she has



total faith in the power of His Word. And so she says to the stewards, and to us, "Do whatever He tells you".

The stewards recognise in Mary the voice of wisdom and they respond, following the instructions that Jesus gives them. And the result? Where before they had no wine, now they have an abundance far beyond anything they could have hoped for.

These stewards listened to the words of Mary, they allowed her to lead them to her Son in order to listen to Him and to accept His word and act upon it - and everything was changed. It will be the same for us. Today, as we gather for this annual Mass, we, too, are being invited to allow Mary to lead us to her son. This is her role in our lives, the task she has received from the Lord, and she is constantly seeking to do this for us. This is why the Church invites us to celebrate her feasts, to honour her in music and art, to reflect on her life, to ask her to pray with us and for us, to make room for her in our lives, our spirituality, our hearts - not because she is important in herself but because, in the Lord's mysterious plan, she has been given to us as our mother and helper, the one who will keep on saying to us, over and over again, "Do whatever He tells you". As members of the Legion of Mary, this must be at the heart of your own lives and of your own apostolic work. Ultimately, it is what fidelity to the Marian dimension of our Catholic faith really asks of us.

May Mary's prayers, and her presences our lives, help us to return our lives to Christ and return Christ to our lives. May they help us return Christ to the centre of the work of the Legion and return the Legion, in all its members and in all its activities, to Christ.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death.

Amen.