



Mass to celebrate retiring principals, welcome and commission new principals and acknowledge and thank continuing principals in our Catholic primary and secondary schools in WA.

Bishops Bianchini, Holohan, Sproxton and I were present as well as a number of priests from the various dioceses.

Bishop Saunders was an apology, due to previous commitments.

The Mass and Commissioning ceremony were held at the CEO Chapel, Leederville and followed by a supper in the grounds of the CEO.

Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Commissioning of Principals – Homily

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

Holy Spirit Chapel, Leederville
Friday, 21 November 2014

There is something very appropriate, I think, about celebrating the commissioning of new principals for our Catholic schools throughout Western Australia on this day when, in the Church's liturgy, we celebrate the Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

At its heart, this feast commemorates on the one hand the idea of dedication or consecration to the Lord, especially in relation of course to Mary, and, on the other hand, not in opposition but in complementarity, the idea that, as a consequence of her self-giving to the Lord, Mary became his dwelling-place. And why? So that, through her, the Lord might be given to us. The beautiful prayer, which sadly is not as well-known and frequently prayed as in the past, the *Angelus*, expresses this very well. In three moments, it captures first the realisation by Mary of what God was asking of her: *The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary and she conceived by the Holy Spirit*. In a second moment, the prayer captures Mary's faith-filled response: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord – be it done unto me according to your word*. And, in a third moment, the prayer reveals what takes place because of Mary's "yes": *And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us*.

These three movements, of realisation, of response and of fulfillment, are, it seems to me, the pattern of every human life and, therefore, the pattern of every Christian life. They are certainly, I believe, the pattern which plays itself out in the life of every person who dedicates him or herself to the work of Catholic education. The ways in which these movements unfold in our lives may not be as dramatic as they were in Mary's life – I would be surprised if many of our



new or continuing (or retiring) principals had an unexpected angelic visitation informing them that they should apply for a principal's position – and the series of events and experiences which led you to make this decision may not even have been, in many cases, explicitly or consciously religious. Even so, I want to say very strongly tonight that it is God who has called you here, it is God who is asking you if you will commit yourselves to this great task of Catholic education as a work of the Church which is Christ's body, and it is God in Christ who wishes to take flesh and become real in the lives of your staff, your students and the families of your school through your witness, your faith and your fidelity to Christ and His Church.

Put in these terms, the responsibility of being a principal in a Catholic school can appear even more daunting than you had perhaps realised. Like Mary in the story of the Annunciation, you might well feel overawed, unsure if you really have what it takes, a little frightened of what you are taking on. If so, it is good to remember that Mary was only finally able to give her own "yes" to God after she had been reassured, in the words of the angel, that "the Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High God will cover you with its shadow". Remember that these words apply also to you. The Holy Spirit did come upon you at your baptism. You are equipped for the tasks ahead through the divine gifts and the ongoing presence of the Holy Spirit conferred on you at your confirmation. You are one with Christ, and this communion is deepened each time you celebrate the Eucharist and receive the Lord's body and blood. And you are leaders in our Church, surrounded by and supported by the prayers of the whole community represented by those who have gathered here with you this evening. Everything is in place so that what was true of Mary might be true of you: that, through your "yes" to God, as through Mary's, the Word might once again become flesh and dwell among us, especially in the lives of the young people and their families whom you, together with your staff, will serve in the name of Christ's Church.

Perhaps all of this can be summed up in the words of Scripture which tonight are addressed directly to each one of you: *Do not be afraid, I am with you. I have called you by your name. You are mine.*

May the prayers of Mary, whose feast we celebrate today and who has been given to us by the Lord as our mother and helper, support you and guide you in all that lies ahead.