



Blessing of the Vincentian Retreat Centre

Homily

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

**Retreat Centre is 625 Nettleton Road Karakkup, Byford
Saturday 29 July, 2017**

“The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him”.

I cannot think of a more appropriate line from the Gospels than this as a guide to helping us understand the significance of what we are doing here this morning as we gather to bless and open this new retreat Centre.

The Catholic Church to which we all belong is a gift to us from God. It is rich in its teachings, in its traditions, in its diversity, and in its unity. Its history stretches back two thousand years to the time of Jesus himself. It was he who gathered his first group of disciples, from whom he chose twelve men to be the leaders of his new community. After Jesus had fulfilled his promise to send the Holy Spirit upon them, these men, and others who joined them, spread across the known world, bringing the message of Jesus to people everywhere. In each new country, and in each new culture, the gospel took root and began to grow, and as it did so the Church took on the characteristics of the time and place in which it found itself. And so today we speak sometimes of Irish Catholicism, or Indian Catholicism, or Polynesian Catholicism, or American Catholicism.

When I was a little boy growing up our liturgy, in spite of these differences, was always in Latin, and what this meant, so people said, was that wherever you found yourself in the world, you would always feel at home in a Catholic church because the Mass was the same everywhere.

This is no longer the case of course, for the Mass is celebrated now in almost every language that exists. And not only that but here in Australia we have become much more aware than we were when I was young that as a Catholic you can belong to the Latin Church as most Australian Catholics do, or to the Syro-Malabar Church, or the Chaldean Church, or the Ukrainian Church, or one of the many other Eastern Catholic Churches.

What is it that can be the source of our unity in the midst of so much difference and diversity? It can only be one thing: that, like the people in the Synagogue in Nazareth, we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. If we lost that, we lose everything.

To be a Catholic is to take Jesus at his word when he proclaims himself to be, as he does in Saint John's Gospel, *“the Way, and the Truth and the Life”*. And so, when we feel as if we may be losing our way, we know what to do – we walk the way of Jesus. If we feel confused and don't know any longer who or what to believe, we know what to do – we commit ourselves to the truth



taught to us by Jesus. And if we feel as if our life is empty, or meaningless, or spiraling out of control, we know what to do – we open ourselves to the life which comes to us in and through Jesus.

To be a Catholic means that we listen to the words of Mary, the mother of Jesus, who once said to the stewards at the wedding feast of Cana, *“You do whatever he, Jesus, tells you to do”*. We listen to her words, and we act on them.

To be a Catholic means that we open our hearts to Jesus when he says to us, *“Come to me if you labour and are overburdened and I will give you rest”*. To be a Catholic means that we listen to and respond to Jesus’ invitation when he says to us, *“Make your home in me as I make my home in you.”* To be a Catholic means that when some of what Jesus asks of us seems too hard we say, as Saint Peter once did when people were deserting Jesus because his teachings did not make sense to them, *“Lord, but who else can we go to? You have the words of eternal life”*.

It is Jesus, and our commitment to him as our Good Shepherd, our teacher, our saviour and our God, which is the heart of our unity as a Church – and this Retreat Centre stands here in Byford as a place where you and so many other people can come and spend time, like the people in the Synagogue in Nazareth, with your eyes fixed on him.

As we bless and open this new Retreat Centre, and as we celebrate Mass to consecrate the building and all that happens in it to the glory of God this is my challenge to you all. Make sure that in everything that happens here, it is Jesus who is at the heart of this place.

Today we enthrone him as the Master of this House – may his Holy Spirit hover over this place as he once hovered over Mary. Because she was so deeply open to the will of God in her life, our savior came among us. May all who come here learn, like Mary, to give their “yes” to God as well – so that Jesus might grow in the lives of every member of our Church and people might come to know him more fully, love him more deeply and follow him more faithfully.