



**St Brigid's College
Investiture of New Principal**

Homily

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

**Tuesday 12 February 2019
St Brigid's College, Lesmurdie**

When I was looking recently at the web page for your College I was particularly struck by the following statement which comes at the end of a brief history of the role of the Sisters of Mercy in the establishment and ongoing development of Saint Brigid's.

We keep alive the memory of these Mercy sisters through our buildings, awards and houses, which carry their names into the future and provide us with opportunities to re-tell their stories and be inspired once again.

Re-tell the story so as to be inspired once again. With this in mind and as a new school year gets underway I want to suggest two things to you all. The first is that you do exactly this: keep on re-telling the story of your College, a story that in one sense goes back to 1929 when the original buildings on this site were purchased by the Sisters of Mercy, in another sense goes a little further back to 1888 when the school was first established on the original site in West Perth, but which goes even further back of course to the arrival of the first Sisters of Mercy in Western Australia in 1846, to the establishment of the Sisters of Mercy by Catherine McAuley in 1831 and most importantly of all to the extraordinary moment in history when God stepped into our human story as one of us in Jesus of Nazareth. Without him there would have been no Catherine McAuley, no Sisters of Mercy in Western Australia and no St Brigid's College. It is this long story, in all its beauty, all its adventure, all its lights and shadows and all its possibilities to enrich our present and shape our future that we should constantly re-tell to ourselves and to each other in order, as the webpage of your school suggests, ***to be inspired once again.***

If you do this, then my second suggestion will make more sense and actually be achievable. Don't just re-tell the story of your past. This year, in all that happens in the College, create a new chapter in the story that will be worth re-telling in the future.

Christians, and in one sense Catholics in particular, are experts in storytelling. At Mass today, we have listened to a passage from the gospel, as we do at every Mass. It tells us something of the story of Jesus, the person who, again according to your webpage, is the centre of the College's



life. The experts tell us that the first Gospel was possibly written down as early as twenty years after the death of Jesus while the last to be written, Saint John's Gospel, was not written down until perhaps as many as seventy years after Jesus' death. But in the years between the death and resurrection of Jesus and the writing of the gospels, the memory of Jesus was kept alive by his followers. Both in formal settings like their liturgies and in informal gatherings when they were together, and didn't have television or social media to distract them, they reminded each other of what they had experienced themselves or heard from others. We can imagine them perhaps sitting around a fire on the cold winter nights or sitting out in the open on warm summer evenings sharing stories about when Jesus said this, or Jesus did that. The memories would have warmed their hearts and prompted them to discuss what it all meant for them at the time and what it now, years later, still meant for them. I have no doubt that the re-telling of these stories would have inspired them once again and led them to a renewed determination to be faithful to all that their connection, their relationship with Jesus, had given them.

At times, of course, their memories would have been troubling ones. They would have recalled the many ways in which they failed to understand Jesus, or support him when he most needed them. But even then they would have also told stories about how, even though they failed him often, he never failed them. Even though they deserted or betrayed him, he never deserted or betrayed them. They would therefore have found themselves telling stories to each other of forgiveness, of compassion, of Jesus's large-heartedness.

These are stories with the power to inspire. They inspired Catherine McAuley. They inspired the first sisters who came to WA. They inspired the sisters who founded St Brigid's College in 1888 and the sisters who had the courage to buy this property in 1929. And they continue to inspire so many of the sisters and so many of the men and women who have worked for the good of this College since then, and still do.

All of you then are the inheritors of this amazing, awe-inspiring tradition. It begins with one person, Jesus Christ, whose mind and heart have been brought to life in the day-to-day lives of so many people. The difference these people, these disciples and followers of Jesus, have made to the world and to this country, is incalculable. And because you stand in this tradition, and through your life here at the College can be immersed in this tradition, you have the power to make an extraordinary difference too. Let the re-telling of the Jesus story, and that of those who have kept that story alive for two thousand years, and still do so today, inspire you so that the world-changing story of Jesus, and the world-changing story of those like Catherine McAuley who followed him, may make the story you create together this year really worth re-telling in the years to come.