



Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ

**Dedication Mass
Divine Mercy Church, GinGin/Chittering Parish**

Homily

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

**Sunday 6 June 2021
Divine Mercy Church, Lower Chittering**

As this beautiful ceremony unfolds this morning, I am very conscious of just how richly God is blessing us in this Archdiocese of Perth. This is the third church that I have solely dedicated in the last six weeks.

The first was at Baldivis, dedicated to St Teresa of Calcutta about six weeks ago.

The second, dedicated to Our Lady Star of the Sea, right at the other end of the diocese at Jurian Bay. And now here we are in Lower Chittering, celebrating this wonderful occasion.

I wanted to begin by telling you that because I wanted to invite all of us to have a deep sense of gratitude to God, for the way in which He is blessing us in this Archdiocese.

We all know that we are going through a difficult time in the history of the Church.

But God does not desert His Church. God is always with us, and richly blessing us. On our part, we have to have hearts that are open to welcome his gifts.

Whether I was in Baldivis, or the southern suburbs or Jurien Bay in the northern suburbs or here in Lower Chittering, in three very different buildings, at the service of three quite different communities of faith, the central reality is the same.

We are gathered together as the people of God, as the people called by God into this church.

And while we might sometimes wonder, why us? Why me? Why has God given us the gift of faith and not given it to other people? And that's a good question that I want to suggest some answers to this morning. The reality is that out of all the people, God could've called into his church, God is calling us. And that again, is a reason for deep, profound gratitude to God for His miracles. Today we celebrate the feast and solemnity, of the Body and Blood of the Lord.



We recall the Lord's sacrifice as we do also, of course, on Holy Thursday night and on Good Friday afternoon.

And a little later, in our celebration, once the altar has been consecrated, we will celebrate again, the mystery of the Lord's death and resurrection and we will step forward and receive the gift of Himself to us in Holy Communion.

And in doing that, the Lord is drawing us ever more deeply into his church.

So I think it's very important for us, particularly on an occasion like this, to reflect on just what it means to be called into God's Church.

Just what it means to be God's Church. Because beautiful though this building is, and while it certainly is in a sense, God's Church, it is we the people, who are really God's Church.

This building, this beautiful building is at the service of our becoming ever more deeply God's Church.

So what does it mean to be God's church? Whether here in this parish, (I suspect many of you belong to other parishes rather than this one) or in another parish in the Archdiocese or even perhaps visitors from interstate or even overseas who knows, the purpose of the Church remains always the same.

This morning, I want to leave you with three thoughts, three gifts perhaps, which you can take away with you when you leave later today.

The first comes to us from the authority voice of the Church with the Second Vatican Council. When in one of the major documents of that council, *Lumen Gentium*, the Church Fathers spoke of what the Church is really all about.

At the heart of what they said is this statement which sounds simple, but is rich in meaning. The Church, they said - and they didn't mean the building, although the building is part of it of course, but they meant the people - the Church is like a sacrament. Just in case, some of us have forgotten our catechism, they helpfully reminded us what that means.

So the Church is like a sacrament - that is the Church is a sign and an instrument of two things. Communion with God and of unity among God's people.

We are called to be a sign and an instrument of communion with God, and of unity among God's people. In many ways, at the end of each day, if we wanted to examine how our day had gone, we might well ask ourselves, what part did I play today in showing that the Church is all about



drawing ever more deeply into communion with God and also drawing ever more deeply into communion especially with my brothers and sisters in the faith. The church is like a sacrament of communion with God, and of unity among God's people. And everything that happens in this Church, especially the sacramental life of this church. But all the quiet, silent prayers that will be offered in this Church as well, they're all meant to be bringing us closer to God, but also closer to each other as brothers and sisters in the faith.

Both of these things are necessary.

And one without the other, won't make us the Church. The second thought I want to leave with you comes from St John Paul II, who of course, is remembered for many other things, as the Pope of Divine Mercy.

Pope John Paul II, was Pope for many years and he spoken and wrote often, about the Church.

But he had one favourite expression that he used over and over again.

He said, the Church is the community of disciples of Christ. It's such a simple idea, and yet again it's so rich in meaning. The church is a community, not a gathering of isolated, independent people, but a community of people who are disciples of Christ.

And that means that we as a people know that rather than looking to each other, or only to each other, rather than looking to our own strengths and skills and talents, ultimately, we have to look to Christ.

Because we are his disciples, we follow him no one else. No one else. No other philosopher, no other politician, no other leader, we follow Christ and we build our lives on Him. And if this church, this church building, is to fulfill its potential, it will need to be a place where the only person ultimately upon whom we fix our guys, is Jesus himself.

And then the third thought comes to us from Pope Francis.

And as many of you would know, Pope Francis tends to speak in, more down to earth language. Right at the beginning of his time as Pope, he was asked about the church. And he said, 'I think of the Church as if it were field hospital in a middle of a battle.

And when soldiers are brought into the field hospital for treatment, the doctors and nurses don't begin by checking their blood sugar levels or their cholesterol levels, the doctors and nurses begin by working out where they are wounded and tending their wounds.

And Pope Francis went on to say, 'This is the great mission of the Church today, to be a healer of people's wounds.



Then he added something, not just a healer of people's wounds, but a warmer of people's hearts.

This Church, if it is to fulfill its potential where people can come and find healing of the wounds that are deepest in their lives, certainly, through the sacraments, especially the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Sacrament of the Eucharist. But also through the community that gathers here.

We need to be people who both come here for our own wounds to be healed, and come here so that we can help heal the wounds of others.

Because that after all, is what being a disciple of Christ looks like.

When Pope Francis says that the great mission of the Church is to be a healer of wounds and warmer of hearts, he is simply saying, really, the great mission of the Church is to be the living sign that Jesus is still among us.

Because Jesus was the great healer of wounds and the great healer of people's hearts, you will find that on every page of the gospels, as you read through.

And if we are to be his disciples, if we are to be the ones who follow Him, rather than anybody else, then we too have to commit ourselves together, as a need to be a community that knows how to heal people's wounds, and knows how to warm people hearts.

This is why this Church dedicated to the Divine Mercy is so important, because perhaps there is no better description of the mercy of God than of God as the healer of our wounds, and the warmer of our hearts.

As Pope Francis said, because he too, is the Pope of Divine Mercy, when he inaugurated the Year of Mercy and said, 'Jesus is the face of the Father's mercy.'

And if we, as his disciples don't reflect that face to others, then, we're not very good disciples.

And this Church is all about helping us to become good disciples. This is what it is to be the Church. This is the vocation in which we all share. We can't just leave it to the priests, or the religious, or the so called professional Catholics. This is the task of every single one of us, given to us, in our baptism, in whatever ways we can do it in the concrete and daily reality of our lives.

So as we gather together this morning and thank God for this wonderful gift to this parish and this Archdiocese, let's recommit ourselves to this beautiful vocation that we've all received, which is at the same time, a great promise and a great challenge.



The Lord looks to us to keep alive and real in our society, his presence among his people. May today's celebration, help us to do exactly that.

(Transcribed)