



Funeral Mass for Fr Wayne Davis

Homily

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

**Wednesday 21 February, 2024
St Mary's Cathedral, Perth**

When I visited Father Wayne on the day which turned out to be the eve of his final journey into the mystery of eternal life, Father Wayne and I were able to talk about a number of things. Wayne knew that he was close to death and was, I believe, at peace with that. And when, as we talked together, he shared with me the meaning of a ring which I think, at least at times, he wore on his finger, I came to understand why. Engraved on the ring, Wayne told me, were the words *“with Jesus, for Jesus, to Jesus”*.

These words express something which we all know, at least in our heads, to be true: that for a disciple of Jesus, and Wayne was certainly that, it is He, Jesus, who must be at the heart of a disciple's life. That Father Wayne had these words engraved on his ring and had them on his lips as he came towards the end of his life, reassures us that as well as knowing this in his head Father Wayne also knew it in his heart and had committed himself to living it out as faithfully as he could.

The desire for Jesus, the desire for God is, Saint Augustine would tell us, at the centre of every human life. *“You have made us for yourself O God”*, Saint Augustine once famously prayed, *“and our hearts are restless until they rest in you”*. While not everyone is conscious of this desire or understands where the true resolution of our restlessness lies, Father Wayne certainly did. As so many of you know here much better than I do, Father Wayne did understand his life in terms of this search for God and did understand his vocation to the Catholic priesthood as a call to accompany others on this search for God. In this sense we might think of Father Wayne's life and ministry as a following in the footsteps of Saint John the Baptist, who was called to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord. I am sure that many of you who have gathered here in the cathedral this afternoon to remember Father Wayne and to thank God for the gift that Father Wayne has been to you, will be thinking of the ways in which his presence in your life has helped you to discover ever more deeply the love, compassion and forgiveness of God, and has helped you to welcome the Lord more fully into your own lives.



Of course, our desire for God, which God plants in the heart of every human being, is a reflection of God's desire for us. As Saint Augustine reminds us, God has made us for himself. The gospel of today's Mass expresses this very strongly and very beautifully. *"I am going to prepare a place for you,"* said Jesus to his disciples on the eve of his own suffering and death, *"and I shall return to take you with me so that where I am you may be too."* Jesus's love for his own was too strong to be defeated by death. His desire to have them with him could not be snuffed out. It is the same for us. Jesus' love for us conquers death and ensures us that, as one of the Church's great prayers expresses it, *"when this earthly dwelling turns to dust, an eternal dwelling is made ready for us in heaven"*.

This is the promise on which our faith rests, and it is the promise which underpins our prayers and our hopes as we entrust Wayne into the Lord's loving care. It is the same promise which strengthened the Jewish people at a time of great crisis for them as they awaited the coming of the Messiah. *"Those who trust in God will understand the truth,"* our first reading from the Old Testament, the Hebrew scriptures, proclaims, *"and those who are faithful will live with God in love, for grace and mercy await those who God has chosen"*.

This faith, which has brought us here this afternoon and which accompanies us and supports us in this time of great sadness and loss for so many, comes to a beautiful crescendo in the final words of this afternoon's second reading. I hope all of us, and in a special way all the members of Father Wayne's family, who have loved, supported and accompanied him throughout his life, might allow these words ring in your hearts as we thank God for the wonderful gift which Father Wayne has been to us, and as we entrust him with great confidence into God's merciful care:

I am certain of this: neither death nor life, no angel, no prince, nothing that exists, nothing still to come, not any power, or height or depth, nor any created thing, can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Eternal rest give to Father Wayne, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. May he rest in peace.