Fifteenth Sunday Ordinary Time (Year A)
Commissioning of New Head of St Thomas More College

Homily

Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB
Archbishop of Perth

Sunday 12 July 2026
St Thomas More College, Crawley

The parable to which we have just listened, and the explanation of it by Jesus, offer us some food for thought as we gather together to acknowledge and celebrate the formal commissioning of Mim Jones as the new Head of College here at St Thomas More's. So, too, does the simple fact that among all the ways in which Mim's appointment has been acknowledged, the celebration of the Eucharist takes pride of place in ways that will not be true of most other Residential Colleges associated with UWA.

These two realities, the parable itself and the Mass in which it is being read and reflected upon, invite us to ask ourselves just what it means to recognise that this College is a significant expression of the life and mission of the Catholic Church here in this archdiocese and in Western Australia more widely.

To speak of the life and mission of the Catholic Church is to speak of much more than simply its various institutional expressions. It is to speak of its fundamental identity. Every institution which "flies the Catholic flag", if I can put it that way, is established and supported by the Church precisely because the Church sees that institution as both an important contribution to the fabric of our society and as a faithful response to the call of Christ to "go and make disciples of all the nations".

This call is, according to the mind of Christ, meant to be invitational. It is the faith of the Church that, often in ways known only to God, the gift of faith and discipleship is offered more widely than we might realise or recognise. However, it is always an invitation and never something imposed by force. For this reason, it is so important to remember the words of Pope Benedict which were also repeated often by Pope Francis: *it is the duty and privilege of the Church "**to propose endlessly, but never to impose**".*

All Catholic institutions will seek to be faithful to this invitational approach in different ways according to their own varied contexts, including their particular clientele. Health and aged care facilities, for example, will seek to be living and practical expressions of the healing ministry of Christ. Social outreach agencies will craft their mission conscious of their obligation to reflect the compassion of Christ to the marginalised, the outcasts, and those most in need. Educational institutions, of which this

College is one, will recognise that as places explicitly dedicated to the formation and support of young people, they must build communities in which what I would call the ***God question*** is both welcomed and facilitated. This will, of course, be done in one way in primary schools, in another way in secondary schools, and in another way again in universities and halls of residence.

To the extent that this is true of any institution, the Church is committed to supporting that institution in every way it can. To the extent that this is not as true as it might be, the Church is committed to offering its guidance and its support to ensure that those who are part of the institution, and particularly those who take leadership roles in the institution, do not lose sight of this fundamental objective.

To borrow the language of this morning's gospel, the "making space" for the *God question* might be seen as akin to the work of the Sower in the parable. The Sower does not go about his or her work by meticulously digging a multitude of little holes, carefully placing a seed in each hole. Rather the Sower walks along scattering the seed by handfuls from side to side, well aware that some seed will be lost, some will initially take root but then wither away, and some will flourish and produce a rich harvest. The Sower does his or her best but knows that ultimately the outcome is beyond his or her control. What gives the Sower hope and encourages the Sower to keep going even if the results are not immediately obvious or seem to be rather disappointing, is the fact that his or her efforts are rewarded because, in the logic of the parable, the outcome of those efforts, when the seed falls on good ground, is beyond everyone's expectations. The original hearers of the parable would have been well aware that to expect even a 30-fold yield, let alone a 60 or a 100-fold yield, would be an outstanding result. The parable, however, directed not just to the farmers of Jesus' own time but to all who are engaged in the work of the Church in any way, is an invitation to His disciples, and today in a particular way an invitation to Mim and those who work with her in the leadership of the College, to put their trust in the Lord remembering that it is he, and not we, who guarantee and determine the results of our work.

Mim, as you continue to develop and deepen your leadership of the St Thomas More community, and grapple with the extraordinary and varied demands which are part of such a role, it is and will continue to be your privilege to also lead a group of senior collaborators, among the staff and the students, who will help you to ensure that the God question, and the Christian response to that question, are always welcomed and encouraged in the College. The ultimate results are God's to determine. Your role, and the leadership you share with others, is to continue to respond faithfully to the challenge, even in the midst of inevitable difficulties, and to offer yourself and your efforts generously to the Lord and to all the people who he is entrusting to you as the leader of this College. We pray that the Lord, who has begun this good work in you, will bring it to fulfilment.