



Iona Presentation Thanksgiving Mass Homily

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

Iona Presentation Primary School, Mosman Park
Friday 2 June, 2017

In the Gospel which we have just read we have heard some words spoken by Mary, the Mother of Jesus, which I think we can all take and use as our own words today: *God the Almighty has done great things for me and holy is his name.*

These words are really an invitation to all of us to think about all the ways in which God fills our lives with so many good things. The fact that we are alive, that we live in this beautiful country, that we have this wonderful school, Iona Presentation Primary, that it is a school full of dedicated and caring teachers and enthusiastic and joy-filled students, and that we have a wonderful history in this school which has been shaped so much by the Presentation Sisters and all those who have worked with them – these are just a few of the things for which we can be really grateful. Today especially, as we celebrate this Mass in which we have a chance to come closer to Jesus and, through him, closer to each other, I think it is important to reflect on just how important the Presentation Sisters, and the spirit which animates them, has been and continues to be for this school.

As I am sure most of you know the Presentation Sisters, so many of whom are with us this morning, look back to a wonderful Irish woman, Nano Nagle, as the person whose faith, and whose concern for others, and whose courage and initiative, gave birth to that small group of women who today are scattered across so many countries in the world including Australia.

Nano Nagle was born a long time ago. Next year will be the three hundredth anniversary of her birth. Most people who were born so long ago have been forgotten but not Nano Nagle. She is still remembered today and in fact, after Mass, we are going to bless the special garden which has been created in the school grounds and which has an image of a lantern which, as I will explain in a moment, is a symbol of Nano Nagle. Each time you pass it you will remember her.

Before I do that though I want to explain why your school has the name Iona. Some of you probably know that Iona is a small island off the west coast of Scotland. It is not easy to get to. You have to get a train from Glasgow to a village called Oban and then a ferry from Oban to a small island called Mull. Then you have to either walk or get a bus from one side of Mull to the other where you catch another ferry to the even smaller island of Iona. Iona is famous because it was from this tiny island that an Irish monk called Columba sent missionaries all over Europe to bring the good news about Jesus to countless numbers of people. So Iona is a place where people became so committed to Jesus that they wanted to spread the news about his love everywhere and to everyone.

When the Presentation Sisters decided to establish a school in this part of Perth they hoped that, like the island of Iona, the school would also be a place where people came to know and love



Jesus and from where people, like all of you, would go out and, wherever you went, share the good news about the love of Jesus with everyone. And because the original school was built up on the hill which seemed to be surrounded by water – the ocean on one side and the river on the other – it seemed like a good idea to name the school after Iona, which was also surrounded by water.

This desire to share the love of Jesus with others was exactly what Nano Nagle decided to do with her whole life. Nano worked all day caring for the poor and the abandoned, and so did the young women, the first Presentation sisters, who joined her. But they didn't put their feet up at the end of each long day. For Nano, it didn't matter that at night it was dark or cold, or lonely and dangerous. If there was someone whom she could help she went to them, carrying her lantern with her. That lantern has become a symbol of Nano Nagle and her sisters, a symbol of her courage, of her dedication, of the light and joy she brought into people's lives, and most of all of Jesus, who once described himself as the light of the world.

Because you are all part of the Presentation family, you too are called to carry the light of Jesus to others. Maybe you won't have a lantern in your hands, but you can all carry the light of Jesus' love in your hearts. And when you carry it in your own hearts, you are able to give it as a gift to others.

This is what the Presentation Sisters have been doing here in this part of Perth for over a hundred years. This is what they are still doing today, not just here in Mosman Park but in many other places in Perth, in Western Australia, in other parts of Australia and in other parts of the world. It is an exciting thing to be part of a world-wide family and every single one of you, because of your connection to Iona Primary, is a part of this family.

Be proud to be a member of the Presentation family, be grateful to the sisters who have kept this wonderful light alive in our Church for such a long time, be brave and strong in doing your part to keep Nano Nagle's lantern burning. And like Nano Nagle, let Jesus be the light of your lives too.