



Farewell Morning Tea for the Jesuits

Speech

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

Holy Rosary Church, 46 Thomas Street Nedlands
Sunday 11 February, 2018

I am very glad to be here this morning and to be able to express my gratitude, and the gratitude of the whole Archdiocese, to the Australian Province of the Society of Jesus as we gather to farewell the Jesuits after 80 years of generous, committed and faithful service to God's people and God's Church here in Western Australia. In doing so I hasten to add that all is not lost, because Fr John Prendiville will stay on in Perth, close to his family, and Fr Hari Suparwito will also stay here while he completes his studies.

In our files we have a letter written by Archbishop Prendiville to Fr Fahy, dated the 10 July, 1936, inviting the Jesuits to come to Perth to establish a College for boys. In the letter, the Archbishop talks about what he describes as "a beautiful site overlooking the Swan River" in Attadale.

Of course we know that the College which the Jesuits did establish was actually built and opened in Claremont in 1938, 80 years ago this year. St Louis's school survived as a boys school from then until 1977 when it was amalgamated with Loreto College in 1977 to form John XXIII College.

If I am correct it was in 1954 that the Jesuits accepted Pastoral responsibility for the Attadale parish, where I think five Jesuit priests served the parish from 1954 to 1973, with a short interlude when Fr Geoff Beyer was parish priest from the end of 1969 to the beginning of 1972. Of course it was in the same year, 1954, that the Jesuits also accepted responsibility for the administration of St Thomas More College, the Catholic Residential College of UWA.

Both John XXIII and St Thomas More Colleges continue to go from strength to strength and will always stand as a testament to the enduring influence of the Society of Jesus in Western Australia. Both Colleges, I know, are deeply conscious of their Jesuit heritage and have been deeply marked by the charism of St Ignatius.

The history of the Jesuit presence in Nedlands is more recent. Archbishop Hickey invited the Jesuits to accept the pastoral care of Holy Rosary parish in 2007 and the first Jesuit parish priest, Fr Theo Overberg, accepted care of the parish in 1978. When Fr Theo finished, Fr Greg Jacobs held the reins for a short time before Fr Joe Sobb was appointed in mid-2007. And of course the diocese has also been served by Fr Steve Astill who has held a number of positions here in Perth, most recently as parish priest of East Fremantle.

When the Jesuit provincial contacted us to say that the Jesuits would be withdrawing from the Archdiocese at the beginning of 2018 I, along with many others, was very sad to hear the news. As a religious myself, I value highly the presence of the various religious charisms which the many



male and female religious congregations bring to the local Church. Each religious order or congregation, through the life and witness of their members, sheds a particular light on the vast mystery of Christ. The Jesuits themselves are in the best position to put into words the spirituality which undergirds all that they are and do, but from the outside, so to speak, I think of things like the importance of careful attention to, and discernment of, the voice of God speaking to us, as individuals and as communities of faith, in and through our experiences in life and in the depths of our heart. I think too of the focus they bring, at least in our Australian context, on matters of social justice, reminding us, as St John would do, that we can hardly claim to love God, whom we cannot see, if we do not love our brothers and sisters, whom we can see.

As we say farewell to the Jesuits this morning, not just from this parish but from our diocese, we cannot do better than to thank them with great sincerity for all they have given to, and been, and done for our Archdiocese over these last eighty years. Their presence and their charism have indelibly marked our Archdiocese, contributing in a very significant way to the rich spiritual heritage we have all received and upon which we are now privileged to build.

And so to Fr Brian, the Provincial, to Fr Joe Sobb, to Fr John Prendiville and through you to all the Jesuits of the Australian Province we say thank you and may God continue to bless you now and into the future.