



ARCHBISHOP COSTELLOE'S STRATEGIC VISION

I want to take this opportunity to share with you a very brief overview of my strategic vision for the Archdiocese of Perth at this time.

Our Archdiocese exists as the local expression in our part of Western Australia of the universal Catholic Church. Our vision, and our strategic plan are, as Pope John Paul II once wrote, grounded in the gospel of Jesus. In this sense our vision has not changed in 2,000 years and as Catholics we therefore have a fundamental call to fidelity to the gospel. We share this with the world-wide Church and live it out in communion with the Church. At the same time, we must live it out in the concrete reality of our own situation here in Western Australia in the twenty-first century. It is for that reason that I said, in the homily I preached at the Mass of my installation as archbishop, that the greatest task, and challenge, we have is to return the Church to Christ and return Christ to the Church. We must, more than ever, make sure that Christ is the heart of everything we say, everything we do and everything we are. Because we find Christ presented to us in the pages of the gospel, read and understood within the faith of our Catholic tradition, we must say then that the spreading of the gospel of Jesus, both amongst our own people and to the wider society in which we live, is our fundamental task and privilege.

When I became Archbishop work was already well underway in terms of developing a concrete strategic plan for our archdiocese. A strategic planning subcommittee had been established with the assistance of the Archdiocesan Finance Council and many objectives had been identified. I gladly accepted and affirmed this process and have endeavored over the last two years to identify the areas of major importance. I am grateful to the members of the sub-committee for their commitment, energy and expertise. Of course, a vision and a concrete plan for our archdiocese will need the commitment of significant resources, financial and otherwise, but in the end it is the quality of our individual and communal commitment to the gospel which will determine whether or not we can be the Church here in our archdiocese that the Lord is calling us to be.

The Finance Office and the Finance Council have a key role in managing our resources so as to ensure, as far as possible, that we are in a position to work consistently towards our goals – but the plan itself is grounded in the gospel, built on the energy and faith of our Catholic community, and ultimately under the direction and leadership of the archbishop of the day.

Practically speaking then, how might our goal of spreading the gospel be achieved? In consultation with many others I have identified a number of priorities which I would like to share with you.

As a first priority, and one of vital importance, I would mention the area of professional standards and our response to the terrible evil of child sexual abuse. Much of my time as archbishop has been and continues to be spent on this and we still have much to do to correct the past and to build a better present and future. This is a delicate and complex task and I am confident that we are now firmly on this journey. My hope is that as a Catholic community we will all see this as an urgent priority for us and do whatever we can to respond as the Lord would expect us to.

Secondly, there is the need for effective communication within the Church and beyond the Church. In the past year I believe we have made some significant progress in moving forward in this area. We have appointed a Communications and Media manager, we have conducted a review of The Record newspaper and made some difficult but necessary decisions about future directions, we are presently creating a new website and intranet, and we are strengthening our relationships with the Media in general.

Thirdly, and very importantly, I see it as one of my major priorities to offer support to all of our priests. Our Church is a Eucharistic community, shaped by the Lord's gift of himself to us in the Eucharist, and our priests are the ones called by the Lord to be at the heart of our Eucharistic communities as their shepherd leaders. I am conscious that our clergy, both priests and deacons,



are faced with many difficult challenges. We all have a responsibility to care for our priests, to support them, to pray for them and to offer them whatever encouragement and cooperation we can. I ask you to help me in lessening and not increasing the demands put upon them and being an ongoing support to them at this time. Essential to the care of our priests is the fostering of vocations to the priesthood and the religious life. And in addition we must provide the best and most comprehensive formation possible to our seminarians, and support them on what can be at times a difficult and challenging journey.

As a fourth priority I would stress the need to strengthen and revitalize our parishes. It is in the parish that our life as Catholics is lived out in the concrete. Among the many things I would hope to see, I would like to mention the following:

- Firstly we must make the parishes places where, more and more, people can truly encounter God, especially in the liturgy and in the wider spiritual life of the parish.
- We must reassess our efforts at providing adult faith formation and must explore all avenues for meeting the needs of our people in this vital area.
- We need I believe to establish a structure for coordinating our evangelization programmes and efforts across the archdiocese.
- We must seek to recapture the understanding of the parish primary schools (where they exist) as works of the parish community rather than as institutions independent of the local parish.
- We must review the functioning of Parish Pastoral Councils and parish Finance Committees and provide ongoing formation for these groups.
- We must also strengthen social engagement and community support as a practical expression of our Catholic faith at the parish level. Here I am thinking of such things as the St Vincent de Paul Society, Lifelink and the many parish care programs that already exist.

A fifth area that requires addressing is our wider social outreach. Many very good organizations and programmes already exist in this area. I want to strengthen these initiatives, encourage mutual collaboration and support, and also identify areas where the Church could contribute but is not as yet active. A mapping exercise is already underway to identify our present situation and suggest areas for expansion. In particular we need to ask where there are further opportunities for collaboration within our own Catholic family, with other Christians living in the boundaries of our archdiocese, with NGOs, and with State and Federal governments.

A restructure of my own office is also necessary, looking at where it might best be located, how it operates on a daily basis and what level of staffing might be required for it to run smoothly.

Finally, there is the need to plan for the future, which will involve both a focus on our present parishes and a clear identification of those areas where we will need to provide new parishes and schools either in the short or long term.

So, there is much for us to do. The matters I have mentioned do not in any way exhaust the challenges, and opportunities, before us. In terms of the issues I have spoken about here I am confident of the Lord's presence at work among us to complete the tasks before us.

My last words are to thank you for the many ways in which you serve the Lord and the people of the Archdiocese of Perth. I hold you regularly in my prayers and I ask you to continue to pray for me.

May God bless you.

+ Timothy Costelloe SDB

Archbishop of Perth, 18th August 2014