

Homily MOG School Closure Mass - 10th December 2017

Words from today's 1st Reading from the Prophet Isaiah: *"Console my people, console them.....speak to the heart and say.....your time of service has ended."*

And at the end there is often need for consolation - end of life, end of relationships, end of institutions, end of schools - yet there is also a reality to be learnt that in every new beginning - each new beginning is a journey to an inevitable end. Just as every new birth heralds an inevitable death from which none of us can escape.

So today we gather to give thanks. Some of you will be thinking that *thanks* is the last thing that ought be on our mind or our lips. But, as I say at many funerals, whatever the circumstances, a Christian funeral is still, even in the midst of grief, pain and tears, a celebration and a time of thanksgiving - and why at the end of every burial we still say: *"Go in peace - Thanks be to God"*.

Why? Because for a time, no matter how brief, we have been blessed with the gift of life: Blessed with friendships and relationships that have given life, hope, and the opportunity to share joys and sorrows. And for that we say *"Thanks be to God"*.

In our school - children have been nurtured, educated, gained wisdom and knowledge, formed friendships and endearing relationships, grown in faith, in hope, in love. *Thanks be to God*.

Teachers have lived out their noble vocation and blessed a community through their dedication, inspiring children across the decades in pursuit of learning and wisdom. *Thanks be to God*.

Families have come together in common purpose to build community and to support an education of their children within the framework of a faith community. *Thanks be to God*.

Even in the adversity and desolation of closure, thanks to the mentoring of our teachers, our children have been able to grapple with such a challenge as this so that they may face this reality with resilience (a virtue too often in short supply) as they look to the future with hope. A gift in itself - for whether we are a child beginning school for the first time or an adult facing the end of life itself - we are all faced with challenges throughout life and if we are protected from those challenges and not educated to meet the challenge then we will have no resilience to face the inevitable challenges that will confront us throughout life. Even on Good Friday - at the moment of Crucifixion - we cry *"Thanks be to God"*, because we have learnt that life follows even the shame, desolation and brutality of the Cross.

So, such an historical event as this occasion today is a timely reminder that today's experience, and how we face it, determines tomorrow's achievements.

Challenge, co-operation, grace, resilience, integrity and hope determines destiny.

Hope sees the invisible, feels the intangible, and achieves the impossible.

Reflecting on the life of MOG School I am reminded of the book of Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament, which reflects the theme of *"transition"* to another way of being and doing:

*“There is a season for everything, a time for every purpose under heaven:
A time for giving birth,
A time for dying,
A time for planting,
A time for uprooting what has been planted.”*

May the sacrifice, faith and generosity of all who have been a part of the life of MOG School enable us to remember:

That between tomorrow’s dreams -- and yesterday’s regret -- is today’s opportunity.

As we glance into the future, hopefully we will stop and reflect on ‘who we are’ - ‘where we have been’ and ‘where we are going’, remembering that we are primarily Christian people who are constantly changing, constantly growing, and constantly searching to find ourselves and God.

End of Mass thanks

Thank all those who have assisted with our celebration of Mass today and all who have participated.

I also take this opportunity to publicly thank everyone who, though with heavy hearts, have worked courageously, co-operatively and with good grace, over these past months, as we have struggled with the closure of our school and all that such an event means to our community.

In particular Miranda Montalti, our Acting Principal, and the school staff and teachers. This has not been a task any of you have chosen and yet you have risen to all sorts of challenges you could never have anticipated when this school year began and you have given our children as smooth a transition into their future as is humanly possible. May God richly bless you as you venture into your own new beginnings.

Also to our Regional Office staff of CEM: Our Regional Manager, Marwin Austerbury, and our Principals’ Consultant, Kerry Bratby. It is generally difficult for most of us to ever appreciate that even for those involved from outside the immediate community such processes as closing a school carries an enormous burden which has its own weight of grief and pain simply because you have shared ours.

For your support - which has been ever ready in all manner of ways - I am very grateful.

Fr. Bill Edebohls PP