

St. Bede's College Chapel
Dedication: 12 September 2019
Homily of The Most Reverend Paul Martin SM DD

It's a wonderful and unusual privilege for a bishop to be able to dedicate the new chapel of a school in which he himself has taught as a priest, and so I'm especially delighted to be with you to dedicate this magnificent house of God, this visible tabernacle for Jesus Christ in heart of the St. Bede's College community.

And even more significant the day chosen for this dedication is especially appropriate, the feast of the Holy Name of Mary, the patronal feast of the Society of Mary. From this day forward this feast will be celebrated in the college as the Solemnity of the dedication of this chapel.

This liturgy began with new chapel being handed to me as bishop of the diocese, the keys and the plans, a symbolic gesture emphasising that I am not here simply to open another building, but to receive this chapel on behalf of God and for the use of God. From today this chapel is not our chapel - it is God's house.

Therefore we don't just bless the chapel for our use as we might do for a classroom or performing arts centre. Today's solemn rite is a dedication and you will see this as we move through the liturgy, acknowledging that this sacred space is now uniquely holy and a privileged place where heaven meets earth among us. From today God will use this chapel to speak to and to touch, to heal and to forgive, to inspire and to encourage those who pass through these doors seeking him in silent prayer and in the sacramental life of the church.

This chapel, this beautiful work of art, continues in the great tradition of Catholic dwelling places for God in our diocese, right at a moment when we are very aware of having lost so many beautiful churches.

The Catholic instruction for the building of a church encourages us: "the very nature of a church demands that it be suited to sacred celebrations, dignified, showing a noble beauty, not mere costly display, and it should stand as a sign and symbol of heavenly realities." Thank you to all of you who have made this ambitious vision a reality, those among you who appreciate that our world needs beauty, and that beauty has the power to raise our minds and hearts to God who made us, who loves us, and who in Jesus Christ is present and active among us.

Thank you to those whose generous gifts of vision, money, time and talent have made this inspired vision a tangible and visible reality. At

one level you have been generous to the college and to future generations of the St. Bede's community. But most of all you have gifted to God a place for Him to dwell among us. Know today the gratitude of God to and for each one of you. May you and your families be abundantly blessed for your generosity.

St. Bede's college exists to educate. I'm not speaking about education in the common and narrow sense of developing gifts and gaining qualifications in the hope of getting a good job - because the real educational endeavour is a process that forms us to live abundantly and eternally. The Marist community has been praying and educating on this site for 100 years. While none of us will be alive on earth in another century, we will still be alive, and the where we are living, and the how we will be living after we die, is at the heart of the mission of education in a Catholic college.

Some of you here this afternoon became Bedeans twenty, fifty and even seventy-plus years ago. You will certainly notice the changes at the college, a reminder that each generation builds to meet the needs of their own times. The chapel that had served this college community for so many years began its life as a gymnasium. This magnificent new chapel is a powerful testimony to the heart of our Catholic faith: new life emerges from death. And our earthly experience of anxiety and suffering are in fact a call to greater maturity and a reminder that our true home is not an earthly one.

That call to greater maturity is central. As I speak to you now I have a unique perspective of the chapel. You are all looking forward to the sanctuary, but I am looking towards the rear, the view that you will have when you leave the chapel. When you leave today, and every time you are in here, take a moment to look up to the round eastern window. There you see Jesus as a teenager, the age of the students of our college. When you look at this window, remember that the teenage Jesus continued to grow in maturity embracing the complex and abundant adventure of adult human life. He understood the inscription on the window, that the life and death of each of us has its influence on others. When you leave this place after prayer, take a moment to look to the teenage Jesus, and remember your own healthy desire to be an influence for good in every aspect of school, family and social life. Commit yourself to living in this way every moment for the rest of your lives.

Now that you have this beautiful chapel, my strong exhortation to every one of you, is to USE IT precisely for what it is for, not a place for casual chat and secular activities or as one more teaching space among many. This is a sacred place, a prime place of encounter with Jesus Christ in the celebration of the sacraments of the church and for personal prayer, since this new building is rightly called *Domus Dei*, the House of God.

Do whatever you can to keep this chapel open, a place welcoming any student, staff member or friend of the college who seeks to take a few moments to be still and pray. Drop in here often – one minute is enough to

invite Jesus to remind you of his presence with you and love for you. Use the confessional so that this new chapel may strengthen your own experience of Jesus present in the midst of your personal struggle and sin.

Every time you drive or walk past this chapel, perhaps at the beginning or end of each day, take a brief moment to remember that Jesus is with you in the midst of your own joys and hopes, griefs and anxieties, perhaps renew that lovely old Catholic custom of making the Sign of the Cross as a simple prayer whenever you pass a Catholic church.

Like Mary the perfect disciple of Jesus let us strive to be disciples for our own time.

And may God, who has begun this good work in us, bring it to completion.