

20160909 Lavalla Catholic College

Lavalla 60yrs of Marist presence

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

I am delighted to be here with you today to celebrate this opportunity of recalling the gift of God's love shown to us on this occasion by the commemoration of the, 60 yrs, of the Marist Education and other contributions to Catholic Education here in the Latrobe Valley, here at Lavalla Catholic College.

Pope Francis never ceases to remind us in this Year of Mercy that "Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy." Today we gather as God's holy people to thank our God that this is so, and further to give thanks in honouring those who, over the last 60 yrs have, in the words of the Baptismal Rite, "*kept the flame of faith alive and burning*".

A 60th Anniversary or Jubilee is known as a 'Diamond Jubilee'. No better image summarises our celebration today. Lavalla Catholic College has and has had many facets. The uniting principal around these facets is the desire for a Catholic Education for our young people as well as a very practical desire to share that gift of faith to literarily show "Jesus Christ as the face of the Father's mercy: to our world.

This desire springs from wanting to share with our young people, not simply a doctrine but a living relationship with Jesus Christ. This relationship, in all its facets, gives an understanding of life and shows how one can make a difference in the world. We rejoice today, that all of those facets of Catholic Education here in Lavalla Catholic College have shown remarkable adaptability and resilience in responding and adapting to the changing social, financial and educational and religious factors in the Latrobe Valley.

Our First reading today from the Book of Sirach reminds us this variety. It begun by reminding us, “*I, wisdom poured forth rivers...*”. Over the years the various rivers that have been poured forth into what is now Lavalla Catholic College, have sprung from the generosity of:- the Presentation Sisters, the Marist Fathers and Brothers, the Brigidine Sisters, and many dedicated lay men and women who have sought nothing more but to be an instrument of this Wisdom which is poured forth so liberally.

By their presence here in this place and others who one day will come to join them, we rejoice that Wisdom is not just an important quality but has a face, has a name. They have been guided by the fact that for us this ‘Wisdom’ is not a thing or a philosophy or a nice lifestyle, but nothing less than Jesus Christ the Son of God and the Son of Mary.

If you visit the website of Lavalla Catholic College it says this,

“Strong Minds and Compassionate Hearts - this is the guiding principle for education at Lavalla Catholic College. In an era of rapid social and educational change there are some constants: the need for young people to have inquiring minds, moral values on which to base their life decisions and empathy for their fellow human beings.”

Having a strong minds and a compassionate hearts are of course most important qualities that we ought to be fostering within, not only our young people, but in all people. If we are to be true to the vision of those whom we celebrate today I think that we need to add another dimension to these two desirable and worthy qualities, namely **Living Faith**.

When we stop and admire the many facets of this diamond which we call Lavalla Catholic College, we see that behind the thirst to build strong minds,

the desire to form compassionate hearts, is the gift of Faith. For faith is the great connector:- a connector with God and people; a connector between people; the organising principle around which we can build our lives.

Returning to our First Reading today we see a relentlessness about this process, for we can never answer yes to that perennial question, “Are we there yet? It continues and invites us to write the next chapter.

As we rightly look back today in thanksgiving God for the Marist contribution to this lustrous diamond, we do take St Paul’s advice in our Second Reading today when he says, “*I never stop thanking God for all the graces you have received through Jesus Christ*”. My sisters and brothers in Christ, great is the gift at grace amongst us. It doesn’t always mean everything has been perfect, for we are not yet in the fullness of the kingdom of God. But it does mean that we must look forward and yarn for that fulness.

Last month I had the great privilege of being a pilgrim with 3,000 other (young?) Australians, to go to World Youth Day in Krakow, Poland. Before the two and a half million young people present in the *Campus Misericordiae*, Pope Francis pronounced a discourse in which he urged them to oppose a certain fear that has crept into our world, a fear that paralyses and prevents openness to and knowledge of others. He reminded us that the gift of faith impels us to build bridges; it does not stagnate, and it calls us forth rather to make a mark in the world and to be protagonists in their lives and the lives of others.

So my dear young people of Lavalla Catholic College and the young in heart, the words of today’s Gospel are still fresh in my mind. They invite us to become child-like; to have a strong mind, a living faith and a compassionate

heart and make a difference in our world. I echo the words of Pope Francis again when he said to the young people of the world at World Youth Day,

“So today, my friends, Jesus is inviting you, calling you, to leave your mark on life, to leave a mark on history, your own and that of many others as well. Life nowadays tells us that it is much easier to concentrate on what divides us, what keeps us apart.”

There is always a risk, of course, in doing this. But let us think about the risk that those whom we are honouring today took. St Michael’s Parish Traralgon and the other parishes involved took a risk to start this great endeavour of catholic Education here in this place and we ought always stay connected to that origin, and our Parishes.

In 1951, in 1956 in 2016 many generous hearts took risk and see what has happened. This is our legacy as we look back in thanksgiving, this is our joy as we look forward with hope

Today Jesus, Who is the way, the truth and the life, is calling you, you, and you to leave your mark on history. And so may each of us add another facet to this great diamond of Lavalla Catholic College; a place where minds are made stronger, hearts are become more compassionate and where faith builds bridges and gives meaning.

+Patrick O’Regan 9th September, 2016

