

Always your brother or sister

“What I am going to say, I want you to remember for the rest of your life...:

- Archbishop Barry Hickey, speaking to Perth students during the LifeLink webcast on June 7

■ By Jamie O'Brien

One question grabbed attention during the live webcast for the LifeLink Appeal, as a secondary school student asked Archbishop Barry Hickey about homeless people.

Schools had the opportunity to email questions to the Archbishop and Auxiliary Bishop Donald Sproston and to view and hear their responses, although the volume of traffic was so great most questions were not answered.

The Prendiville College student asked the Archbishop, “Your Grace, do you have to face a lot of people who are homeless and wanting food and water?”

“What I am going to say,” replied Archbishop Hickey, “I want you to remember for the rest of your life.

“It’s the most important question I have had so far - do I have to face a lot of people who are homeless and wanting food and water?

“Most of us don’t.

“We live out in the suburbs and



Confronting poverty: we are called to see Jesus in all the homeless, Archbishop Barry Hickey told students during a live internet broadcast for the schools’ LifeLink Appeal.

people have got their own homes, but I live in the centre of the city - that’s where God has placed me, if you like - and in the centre of the city there are a lot of homeless people.

“Many of them have found a refuge on my front verandah.

“Last night there were eight homeless people wrapped up in blankets.

“I give them food...a little. I give them water.

“I give them coffee and I could say these people are unwashed, they’re smelly, they’re dirty and I don’t want them, they should go elsewhere.

“But there is nowhere else for them to go!

“Wherever they go they get kicked out. So what is God asking me to do? Is he asking me to kick them out like everybody else?

“Jesus said words that I can’t forget. He said, ‘whatever you do to the least of my brothers and sisters, you do to me.’

“So I am challenged to see Jesus in all these homeless people with tons of problems and I have to respond as if I am responding to Jesus.

“So do you! So does everybody who has been baptised.

“It is the most important lesson that we can learn.

“I have had to learn it the hard way, and it is still hard.”

More than 120 primary and secondary schools took part in the two 45-minute sessions. Students logged on through the IT facilities of the Catholic Education Office.

LifeLink Day is an annual event that encourages young people to show they care for people in the community who need help.

LifeLink is the umbrella organisation through which the Archdiocese funds 13 agencies that help more than 60,000 West Australian families and individuals each year.

The agencies provide practical assistance and supportive programs for the unemployed, homeless, migrants and refugees, people with physical and intellectual disabilities, those suffering from HIV/AIDS, families in crises, those battling addictions and abused women and children. Many schools use it as the foundation for practical education in Christian charity.

The complete recording of the webcast is available at www.LifeLink.com.au. Information is also available about the LifeLink agencies and there are facilities for donations to be made. All 13 agencies of LifeLink deliver more than \$24 million in services each year.