



2017 LifeLink Day for Primary Schools

Speech

**By the Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB
Archbishop of Perth**

Newman College, Churchlands
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Good morning everybody, it's great to be here and I want to say a big thanks to Mr Finneran and Newman College for allowing us to come here and to be able to share in the wonderful facilities that the school has offered us so generously.

I'm also aware that there are lots of people watching us on the livestreaming and so you're just as welcome as all the ones who are physically present and I hope everyone's as excited as I am because this is really one of those important occasions each year for me as the Archbishop, for Bishop Sproston as the Chair of Lifelink, for all of those involved in Lifelink, but also in a very special way for our Catholic schools, both our primary and our secondary schools. We had a launch for the secondary schools a few weeks ago and now we're here to launch the primary schools event.

In a moment I want to tell you a story, and there'll be some slides up on the screen to help you follow the story. It's a story that many of you will have heard before I do that, I think it's important, I was going to ask people a few questions, but it's a bit hard with lights in my face I can hardly see you out there, so rather than ask you the questions I'm just going to say that I presume everybody knows what a fable is. I'm going to tell you a fable, but I thought I should explain what it is, because a fable that someone has in a sense made up to try and get a point across to us.

In a sense the poem that the Grade Six students presented so beautifully this morning is a fable, because I'm not sure if there was ever a particular bird who one day decided to have a chat with God about whether or not the bird could fly. It's a kind of creative story that teaches something really important. The fable I remember best from when I was your age was one of Aesop's fables called the hare and the tortoise. Does anyone remember that fable? Jesus used to do that all the time, the fancy word for those stories Jesus used to tell is a parable, but they were just stories that Jesus made up in order to try and help us to see something important that he wanted to teach us.

One of the best ones is the story of the prodigal son. Jesus didn't usually give his stories any title, so the story I'm going to tell didn't have a title, so I've given it a title, and the title I've given this story is the Man Who Lost His Heart. I think you all know why we're talking about hearts this morning, I think a lot of you have been working on a little heart that you brought a long with you or sent here that we might discover out on the oval a bit later. So you already know the importance of hearts, well this story is about a man who lost his heart. I just want to talk a bit about that story.

There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who lived in luxury every day. Lived really well, looked after himself really well, had a fantastic life. At the gate of his house was



laid a beggar, a poor man, a man who had nothing, called Lazarus. And he was so badly off that he was covered with sores, his whole body was covered in sores, and he was longing to eat just the scraps the crumbs that fell down from the rich man's table. It was so bad that even the dogs used to come along and lick the poor man's sores. The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man died and was buried. The rich man looked up into heaven and he saw Abraham far away and Lazarus was by his side. So the rich man called to him, father Abraham he said, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue. Because of course Lazarus was up with Father Abraham in heaven, and we all know where the rich man ended up. Abraham replied to the rich man, he said remember in your lifetime you received many good things while Lazarus received many bad things, but now he is comforted in heaven and you are suffering. And then Jesus went on to explain not just the meaning of this parable but the meaning of his teaching, Jesus said, whatever you did for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did to me. And whatever you failed to do to the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you failed to do to me.

If you read that story, you'll realise that the rich man wasn't a particularly bad man or a particularly cruel man, he didn't go out each day past Lazarus lying at his gate and laugh at him and make fun of him because he was so poor. He didn't kick him when he went past. He didn't do anything to him. So he wasn't necessarily a bad man, he wasn't a cruel man. He wasn't trying to hurt somebody. So he doesn't fit in to the first part of what Jesus said, up there on the screen. The rich man fits into the second part of what Jesus says on that screen.

Whatever you failed to do to the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you fail to do to me. I think the problem to do with the rich man is that he lost his heart. He went in and out of his home every day and he didn't even notice this poor sick sad and hungry man lying there who he could have helped if he wanted to. He failed to see that the person was there and that the person needed some help. And I think that's the point that Jesus is trying to get across to us in the story. What makes us a good person isn't just the good things that we do, it's also the things that we avoid not doing. A good person is on the lookout for people in need and wants to do something to help them. So I think the message of the story, and it's really the message I think is that good people notice that there are other people in need and they want to help.

Each one of you would have in your school your favourite saints. Many of our schools are named after our saints and in the Catholic Church we're so lucky because we've got so many great heroes in our Church. One of the great heroes of our Church is Cardinal Newman, after whom this College is named. But another one of our great heroes is our own first Australian saint Mary MacKillop. She was born in Australia, born in Melbourne, she grew up in Melbourne, she moved to South Australia, and she eventually decided that she wanted to become a religious sister. And none of the orders that existed at the time seemed to be doing the sort of thing that she wanted to do, so what did she do? She decided to create one of her own. As she gathered a group of women around her, the first sisters, the Josephite Sisters, one of the things she used to often say to them is this, she used to say to them, never see a need without doing something about it. That was the problem of the rich man in the story that Jesus told.

The first problem is that he didn't even see the need even though it was staring him in the face. Because he didn't see it, he couldn't do anything about it. And maybe if he'd lost his heart, even if he did see it, he wouldn't have wanted to do something about it. See how important it is not to



lose your heart? Mary Mackillop used to say to the first sisters, if you really want to live a good life, a really generous life, a really worthwhile life, this is the kind of person that you'll want to be.

Someone who never sees a need without doing something about it. Now LifeLink is all about helping us to do something for those people who need us. As the video showed us before and as Bishop Sproxtton mentioned, there are lots and lots of people in Perth and in WA who really need some help. We need to be like Mary Mackillop, we need to be the sort of people who realise that people need help, and that we're going to do something about it. And one of the things that you can do about it is to help in your own schools, to raise some money so that agencies like the ones we saw: Emmaus Community, Shopfront, the Emmanuel Centre, all those different agencies, they're actually able to give people the help they need. We can't run around and help all the people who are in need personally ourselves, but we can do something. We can offer a bit of money so that those whose job it is to reach out to these people, can reach out.

I think we need to go a little bit further and that leads me on to the next slide. The thing about Mary Mackillop is that she had eyes to see, but the rich man didn't. His eyes were closed, not literally but figuratively. His eyes were closed because he lost his heart. Mary Mackillop never lost her heart, and so her eyes were always open and on the lookout for people in need, and the people in need might be people that you go back to school with in the bus, or they might be the kid that's sitting on their own at lunchtime with no-one to talk to, or they might be the ones that are getting bullied. And if you've got a heart like Mary Mackillop had a heart but the rich man didn't have a heart, then you'll have your eyes open, and you'll be saying to yourself, what could I do to help this person?

As well as that, you're the ones who've been chosen by your school, to come here this morning, so when you go back to your school, you can kind of be at the centre of some efforts that your school will have to raise some money to help our Lifelink agencies. So be like Mary Mackillop, have eyes that are open, on the lookout for people in need and that will help you not to lose your heart. And of course Mary Mackillop had ears to hear, but the rich man didn't. He must have walked past Lazarus that poor man, day after day, and you can be sure that Lazarus was calling out saying please give me something to eat, please help me, but he couldn't hear because he'd lost his heart. And it was sad for him, and sad for Lazarus. So that leads me to the third point there, because it's all summed up there in that last line, Mary Mackillop had a heart to love with, and the rich man didn't. I think one of the questions for each of us, not just for you out there but for me as well and Bishop Sproxtton and Dr McDonald and Mr Mendez and Mr Finneran and all of us, the big question for all of us is, are we going to be like Mary Mackillop, or are we going to be like the rich man in today's fable?

The Spirit Award is not based really on how much a school raises. Obviously raising money to help us with our agencies is really important, but there's something even more important than that. My Spirit Award is presented to the school which comprehensively demonstrates active support for my LifeLink Day editions, embraces the goals of LifeLink Day, that is, who not only learn about the Church's response to people in need in the Archdiocese, but who also undertakes some form of fundraising in support of the social service agencies funded through LifeLink. The school that commits to educating students on their responsibility to care for those less fortunate in our community. And the school that promotes an ethos of caring and compassion for students, teachers, parents and the wider community, that we all have a responsibility to show love and compassion, not just on LifeLink Day but of course, everyday.



There's a sense that any school that engages with LifeLink in any way, or to the best of their ability is deserving of the award, because all of our schools, especially thanks to the help of the Catholic Education Western Australia demonstrate a real enthusiasm and generous support for LifeLink Day. Choosing schools for the Spirit Award each year, Bishop Don and I might identify schools that have made an extra effort, being especially creative or gone that little bit further to help people in need.