

TRANSCRIPT

Andrew Watson: So good morning everybody and welcome to Newman College and I'd like to introduce Archbishop who is online with us at the moment. So I'll hand over to Archbishop Costelloe. Thank you.

Archbishop Costelloe: Good morning everybody. I hope you can hear me. As you can see, I'm not there in person, but I'm here on online. Unfortunately I've got COVID and many of you know what it's like to have COVID or what it's like for other people in your family to have COVID. You'll be pleased to know I'm not feeling too bad, but I certainly don't want to pass the virus on to anybody else, so I'm really happy to be able to join you online this morning at least to be present in that way. Thank you all for being a part of our LifeLink launch this morning and a big thank you to Newman College and everyone there for hosting us. Once again, you are always very generous to us and we are very grateful. I'll come back a little bit later to talk to you for a little while and share some thoughts with you about LifeLink, but just at the moment I simply want to say good morning, welcome. Thank you for being with us and enjoy what we've prepared for you. So back to you.

Andrew Watson: Thank you Archbishop, and can I extend a very warm welcome to you all today to Newman College. My name is Andrew Watson and I'm the principal of Newman College. I'd also like to in our welcome to our community today, to welcome the Most Reverend Tim Costelloe, as we've already heard from the Archbishop, Most Reverend Don Sproston, our Auxiliary Bishop of Perth and chairman of LifeLink, and the Very Reverend, Father Vincent Glynn, the Episcopal Vicar for Education and Faith Formation. Reverend Mark Powell, Director Of Religious Education · Catholic Education Western Australia, representing Dr. Debra Sayce, the Executive Director of Catholic Education Western Australia. Reverend Father Kaz, Reverend Father Peter from both the parishes in Floreat and Doubleview. Mr. Daniel Lynch, the Executive Director of the Office of the Archbishop.

All principals, all staff from both Catholic education and from the schools, our students and friends. So welcome to you all after that big introduction there too. And today's launch is also being live-streamed. So a very big welcome to all our schools and students who are joining us today online. I would like to call forward our year six students, Cooper Regusio and Grace Taylor to lead us in an acknowledgement of country.

Cooper: We at Newman College would like to say thank you to the Whadjuk people of the Nyoongar Nation for letting us share your land. We promise to look after the animals and the people too.

Grace: Hello Land.

Group: Hello Land.

Grace: Hello Sky.

Group: Hello sky.

Grace: Hello me.

Group: Hello me.

Grace: Hello friends.

Group: Hello Friends.

Andrew Watson: Thank you very much Cooper and to Grace, just extend that further welcome as I said to Newman College and we're proudly a Catholic school educating in the Marist tradition. And of course at the heart of our charism, is our commitment to our family spirit by how we are present to each other. And I hope you feel that today as we gather in this, the Marist Auditorium. And in every Catholic school we keep front and center the support of those in need. Today gives us the opportunity to learn more, to share more in our schools, the work undertaken through LifeLink and I'd like to introduce and call to the lectern, the Most Reverend Donald Sproxtton, Auxiliary Bishop of Perth and Chair of LifeLink.

Donald Sproxtton: Well, thank you Andrew for the welcome to the college and I'd also want to thank you and the college for hosting the Archbishop's official launch of LifeLink Day for primary schools. I'd like to acknowledge and thank of course the parish priests who are here. Father Kaz and Father Peter, very grateful that they have found time to be with us today and have joined us for this important event and a very special welcome of course to everyone else who are here, all the principals, the teachers, and above all the students upon whom we depend so much for the promotion of LifeLink within the schools. We're delighted that you have made time to join us. So to begin, I'd like us to just look at the screen and to see the prayer that maybe we could all say together. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Group: God of mercy and compassion we praise you for your goodness, may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Fill us with the spirit of loving service as we recognize in those we meet the face of Jesus, your Son. Through the generous work of our LifeLink welfare agencies, may burdens be lifted from the shoulders of your people and may they feel the warmth of your kindness and love. We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen.

Donald Sproxtton: I now like to introduce Father Vincent Glynn, who is the Episcopal Vicar for Education and Faith Formation.

Father Vincent Glynn: Thank you Bishop. Lovely to be here once again. I thank Newman College for having us this morning. Good morning everybody.

Group: Good morning.

Father Vincent Glynn: Bishop Don was saying, "Up here it's very hard to see you all because we're blinded by these lights." But I can see a few more as I stand here. So it's good to see so many of our young people from our schools present here this morning. My duty today, which is a great pleasure, is to introduce to you and to let you know of the new website which LifeLink has developed over the last 12 months. And I know that you're all a lot more tech-savvy than I am, so hopefully this will make sense to you. When you log into ww.lifelink.com.au. It's on the screen there.

You'll discover a modern, visually appealing and hopefully easier to navigate website, which will give you and your school a tremendous amount of information, photos, and videos on the work of our social welfare agencies. And there are also direct links to each of these agencies and I would encourage you in your schools to go to those links and to click on the agencies that work in a whole lot of areas, Aboriginal Catholic Ministry and so on, and to see what they actually do. From the homepage, you can access what's called, The School's Page. Click on this link and you'll discover a video which explains what LifeLink is and does and who our agencies help within the community. This video was produced by some of your peers, so I have some very talented students from across our art class in schools and was officially launched in 2021.

And once again, I encourage you to go to that school's page. Also on that school's page, there's information for both primary and secondary schools as well as resources and information for you to participate in LifeLink Day 2023. So if you're struggling with ideas or need some help in how you might raise some funds, then this school page and this resource will be a great help to you. Although I know that you're very good at coming up with ideas. The Archbishop, Bishop and I warmly welcome your feedback and your suggestions regarding this new website. These are your pages, so please share your thoughts and comments with us via the email link provided on the website. And I know that we look forward to those comments, particularly good suggestions.

In closing, I encourage you all to participate fully in LifeLink Day 2023 and help show your support for our brothers and sisters in need here in WA, as you've done for many, many years in the past. I now invite Reverend Mark Powell, Director of Education for CEWA to come forward and speak to you.

Mark Powell:

Thank you Father Vincent, and good morning to you all. It's a great privilege to be able to be here, to be able to gather again, because you'd remember last year we gathered virtually, but this year we're back to being together and I extend my thanks to Archbishop Costelloe, Bishop Sproxtton and Father Vincent for being here with us today.

I also wish to express my thanks to the principal of Newman College, Mr. Watson and his staff who always support LifeLink so generously and are hosting us here this morning. I am pleased to tell you that students in Catholic schools have contributed more than 2.5 million since LifeLink began in 1999. Every dollar that is raised goes directly to the service and care of those people most in need in our Archdiocese. Please extend my thanks to the school communities you represent for all they do in raising this money. Last year, even with the restrictions due to COVID and the cancellation of the Archbishop's LifeLink Day launch events, schools raised more than \$100,000 in support of LifeLink Day, slightly less than our target, but an outstanding achievement given the circumstances. So thank you all for your generosity and please give yourselves a big round of applause.

We all hope that this year you'll once again join together and raise even more to help those in need in the community. The generosity and passion students in Catholic schools have for supporting those less fortunate than themselves really is a sign that Jesus is alive and well in Catholic schools and that young people want to build a better world. I would like to congratulate you all on your projects. I can see that there's been so much work and research that has gone into them. I hope you all learned about the LifeLink agencies and how they support those in need in the Archdiocese. As ambassadors for LifeLink, I want to encourage you to do three things when you go back to your schools.

Firstly, when you go back, thank each of the classes for the projects and the work that has gone into them. Encourage people at school to check out the resources that have been uploaded to the new LifeLink website to help celebrate and share LifeLink Day.

Secondly, as a practical application of our discipleship, spread the word and accept the challenge to fundraise even greater amounts this year so that we can work together to increase our efforts to support LifeLink. Just a reminder that even though LifeLink Day is officially launched today, schools can hold fundraising activities throughout the whole year.

And finally, we all need to remember to keep the LifeLink agencies and the people they support in our prayers. Seeing you all here reassures me of how lucky we are to have such wonderful young people in our schools. All of you offer signs of hope for the future because by following Jesus and opening your hearts to serve others, you create a better world for everyone. So I'd now like to invite Mrs. Diana Otero, the team leader of religious education and faith formation at Catholic Education WA, to come forward.

Diana Otero:

Thank you, Deacon Mark. Each year the Archbishop asks primary school students to participate in a special project, hopefully to build greater understanding about the work of the LifeLink agencies and how the church responds to our brothers and sisters in need in our very own community. These projects we hope also provide an opportunity for you to show your creativity in an imaginative way. So your task this year was to research the LifeLink agencies via the website and to identify the issues that people in need face right here in the Perth Archdiocese and how the LifeLink agencies support those people.

Then you were asked to look through newspapers and magazines for headlines, phrases, words that represent injustices, issues, which are relevant to the LifeLink agencies and cut them out as you are searching. Think about the role that newspapers and magazines play in creating or stopping the issues people in need face in our society. So I hope that that was a really good thing for you to do and to learn so much about what is happening. Finally, after you collected all your information, you were asked to arrange the headlines, words, and phrases in a collage, and many of your creations have been displayed here this morning. And on behalf of Archbishop Timothy, we just want to thank you and congratulate you on your outstanding efforts and you can see the beautiful collages behind me.

So really amazing work that you have all done. A reminder too, and I hope your teachers have told you that on Saturday the 5th of August, just before the Feast of St. Mary MacKillop, the Archbishop will invite some schools and students to join him at the cathedral in Perth, at St. Mary's Cathedral for a special project. So all your collages for LifeLink Day will be used to create a giant cross within the grounds of St. Mary's Cathedral. And later in a few weeks we'll let schools know about that. But it's going to be very exciting for everybody who goes into the city, goes near the cathedral to see the amazing work that you people have put together. So now I would like to invite Archbishop Costelloe back to speak to you about LifeLink. Thank you.

Archbishop Costelloe:

Thank you, Diana very much. And once again, good morning to everybody and again a big thank you to all of you for being part of our LifeLink launch this morning. And my apologies again for not being able to be there with you. As I said to you at the start, I've got COVID and I certainly didn't want to pass it on to anybody else, but as I think I said at the start, I'm not feeling too bad, but I thought it was best to stay home and join you from my study, which is where I am at the moment in the cathedral presbytery, which is right across the road from St. Mary's Cathedral right there in the city. So not everybody gets into my study, so you are privileged. You get to join me in my private study at home. I hope you're impressed by all the books you can see behind me. I'd like to say I'd read them all, but I'm still working my way through some of them.

The reason why I am speaking to you this morning is really because I wanted to share with you some thoughts about LifeLink and about just how important this really is in the life of the church, the Catholic Church here in our Archdiocese here in Perth. LifeLink has been around now for quite a while. I don't know if you are aware of this, but it was actually started by Archbishop Hickey, who was my predecessor as the Archbishop of Perth.

And when I took over 13 years ago, it was already very much an important reality in the life of our Archdiocese. Archbishop Hickey had become very concerned about the number of people in Perth, in those days, who in one way or another were finding life really, really difficult. And Archbishop Hickey was very keen to do whatever he could to help these people, but he made an important decision.

He came to an important realization that that was something he couldn't possibly do on his own. So he needed help. And he also knew that as the leader of the Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Perth, he was in a position to encourage all the Catholic people of the Archdiocese, all the young people, all the old people, all the people in the middle, and all those who may not be Catholics but who in one way or another, like some of you here this morning are still part of the church because you are part of our Catholic school system to work together and that's the important thing, to work together to help people in need. So what he did was he set up a number of organizations and agencies which had as their task to look after particular needs that different groups in our society had. Different situations which were making it hard for these people to really live their lives to the full.

Now as Diana has just mentioned, I'm very well aware that you've been taking part in this year's special project, which was to research all our LifeLink agencies and then put the results of your research on those posters, which I could see behind Bishop Don and Father Vincent and Mark and Diana when they were speaking to you. I wish I was there to have a better look at them. They certainly look fantastic and congratulations to all of you. But as Diana mentioned, the plan is that in August, on August the fifth, all of that work will be brought here into the cathedral just across the road from where I am now, and we'll build a gigantic cross in the grounds of the cathedral so that everybody can become more aware of the needs of people in our society.

The fact that you've done all that means that you already know what our LifeLink agencies do. So there doesn't seem to me to be much point in me going over all of that again. Father Vincent's told you how to get onto the website and research a little bit more if you want to. So I don't want to speak about what our LifeLink agencies do here in the Archdiocese of Perth. I want to speak about why LifeLink agencies do what they do and about why I wanted to invite all of you to help those people who work in our LifeLink agencies to do what they do for other people. And how can you do that?

Well, you can do it by raising awareness, which is what all your beautiful posters have done, being promoters, I guess you could say, of LifeLink amongst your family and amongst your friends and certainly in your school and parish communities. And then also of course, by doing everything you can to help raise some money to keep our LifeLink agencies going so that we can continue the vision of Archbishop Hickey to make sure we are looking after people who need us.

You might remember that when we began our presentation this morning, we began with the acknowledgement of country, which was beautifully led for us by Cooper and Grace. The two year-six student leaders there at Newman College. Cooper and Grace invited us to say hello land and point our hands and our fingers to the ground. I was putting the wrong leg trick, to the ground. They then invited us to say hello sky and point our hands to the sky. They invited us to say hello me, and to cross our arms over our chests and then to say hello friends and reach out to those next to us. To point to the earth and to the sky and to ourselves and to each other is a good reminder to us that we are connected to the land and to the sky, to each other and of course also to ourselves.

We rely on the land because among other things, it's the land which provides us with our food. We rely on the sky because among other things, it's from the sky that the rain falls and the sun shines to make the earth a place where we can live in safety and security and have our needs met. We point to ourselves because we know that we are special and unique and have many gifts and talents for which we should be grateful. And we point to each other because we know that we are meant to care not just for ourselves but for each other, to look after each other, to be responsible for each other.

As Christians and certainly for most of us who are there at Newman College or watching this online, for most of us who belong to the Catholic Church, but not just us. Also for other Christians, when we pray, we often also use our hands to point in a particular direction. We point to our forehead and say in the name of the Father, we point to our chest and say in the name of the Son, we point first to our left shoulder and then to our right shoulder and say in the name of the Holy Spirit, we do this because we know that we would not have the land or the sky or ourselves or each other if God hadn't given all of these wonderful things to us as God's gifts to us.

Sometimes of course, we take the land for granted and when we do that, the land, if it's not looked after, will not be able to provide us with the food we need. Sometimes we take the sky for granted, spewing all sorts of poison into the sky and causing all sorts of environmental problems, as all of us are aware. Sometimes we can take ourselves for granted and we don't look after ourselves properly by eating well and exercising and doing all the things we need to do to keep ourselves healthy. And sometimes of course, we also take other people for granted and forget that it is our job not just to look after ourselves, but to look after each other. And of course, when that happens, when we take other people for granted, lots of people who for one reason or another struggle in their lives are left without the help that only we can give, because God wants to work through us to bring help to the lives of those in need.

If it's true that we can take the land and the sky and ourselves and each other for granted, it's also true of course, that sometimes we can take God for granted and never even give God a second thought. Just as sometimes we don't give other people a second thought, or our need to look after our environment, a second thought. And when that happens, when we take God for granted, which really means to push God to the edge of our lives or forget about God altogether, then we run the risk of forgetting about all the other really important things which are God's gifts to us in the first place. We can fall into the trap of thinking that the only really important person that matters is me and that everybody else exists in order to be at my service and do what I want them to do.

Because of that danger it is really very important never to take God for granted and never to push God to the edge of our lives. It's why for us as Christians, it is also important therefore to take Jesus seriously, because as you all know, we Christians believe that Jesus is actually God among us as one of us. Most religions recognize that God is so great, so mysterious, so powerful, so much bigger than anything we can ever think about or imagine that in a sense it's just not possible to really understand God, let alone be close to God, or be on friendly terms with God, or really know what God is asking of us. The thing about Christians is that we believe that God does not want it to be that way. We believe that God did not just make us, but that God loves us and wants to be close to us and he wants us to know him.

And for that to happen, God decided to step into our story, into our human history and become one of us in Jesus so that we could know him and love him and understand him and serve him. This is why we can't afford to take Jesus for granted, because when we do that, we end up taking God for granted and then we lose sight of all the other things that God is asking of us.

All of this explains why we as people who either belong to the Catholic Church or are caught up with the life of the church because we're part of our Catholic schools, it's why we do our very best to support our LifeLink agencies. Because each one of those agencies which you've been researching, each one of them has been set up as a way to respond to Jesus. They're set up to show him that we really do want to know him and that we are trying to understand him and we're doing our best to respond to him.

We know that from all the different things he said and did, but one in particular I think stands out for me. It's one of his stories that he told, what we call his parables, and it's the story in which he talked about what happens when we meet God and God lets us know what he thinks about the way we have lived our lives. It would be very interesting, I think, wouldn't it? To be able to find out from God exactly how he feels about the way we are living our lives and whether he's happy with it.

This is what Jesus said in this particular story, this particular parable. He was talking to people and he said to them, "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I didn't have enough clothes to wear and you gave me warm clothes to protect me from the winter chills. I was sick and you came to visit me. I was lonely and isolated and locked away from everybody else, and you came looking for me and were ready to sit down and spend some time with me."

And then in the story, in this parable, the people say back to God, "Lord, when did any of this happen? We don't remember ever seeing you hungry or seeing you thirsty or seeing you in need of shelter or clothes?" And then the Lord says back to them, and this is the crunch, this is the key point, "Every single time you did any of these things for other people who were in need, you actually did them for me." That's what he said in the story. And I think that's what Jesus is saying to all of us this morning.

So when you, in your local school work together to come up with some activities to raise money for the people who come to Shopfront, for example, looking for something to eat, you are actually doing something to give food to Jesus himself because he is united with those hungry people. When you spend time with your friends at school planning projects that will raise money for those people who perhaps have disabilities and who are looked after by Identitywa or by the Emmanuel Center, you are actually doing something for Jesus himself because he is united with those people who in one way or another aren't really able to care for themselves.

All the efforts you make to support our LifeLink agencies are things you are doing for Jesus himself because he is united with every single suffering person who comes to one of our LifeLink agencies for help. In the end then, we support LifeLink because we know that every single person, no matter how lost or lonely or poor or struggling or sick or hurting, he or she might be, is deeply loved by God, as deeply loved by God as we are. And that the best way that we can show our love for God and our desire to respond to God as he speaks to us in the words of Jesus, is to show our love for the people that God loves. And that's everybody, and especially those in need.

So all of this is why this morning I was really keen, even though I'm not that well, to be able to be with you and ask you to enthusiastically support my LifeLink initiative and help this year to raise a lot of money, a minimum of \$120,000 if at all possible for people in need in our community. So I want to officially launch my LifeLink Day 2023 for primary schools and extend to you a special prayer of blessing. So let's just pause for a moment and remember that because we're all gathered together, we are in the presence of the Lord. Even those of us who aren't in the auditorium at Newman, but are joining online, we're all in the presence of the Lord. So let's pause for a moment. Ask him to be with us and listen as I pray this prayer, God bless.

May the Lord bless you and strengthen you and support you as you work together to bring some joy into the lives of people who often experience very little joy because of the difficulties of their lives. May God help you all to be signs and sharers of his love and grace in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

And as I finish, once again, I want to offer my very special thanks to all of you for coming to Newman College this morning or for joining us online, all of you who have been a part of this special LifeLink launch, all the technical people, Mr. Mendez, Bishop Don, Father Vincent, everybody else who's been a part of the organization, a big thank you to all of you and to all the principals, the teachers and the students throughout the Archdiocese as you embark on your LifeLink Day. Thanks so much everybody. I hope you are enjoying the day and hopefully next year I'll be able to join you in person. Thanks a lot.