

Silverstream class 1957-1961 reunion mass homily

courtesy of Fr Michael McVerry SM

Thursday 20 August 2020

Today we come together to celebrate a thanksgiving mass for the gifts and graces we have received and been enriched with during our foundational years at Silverstream. We were blessed with an opportunity to become steeped in what the good book written by Fr Cliffy Bowler called, "Living the Truth".

We were of an impressionable age at that time and open to the significant influences that went towards forming our character, our faith, our values, and priorities in life. Living, studying, and recreating in such proximity, inevitably built up some solid friendships and it is another gift that we come to thank God for. To be educated in one of the most desirable colleges, in one of the most desirable countries in the world, put us in a very privileged group.

Our teachers were a group of men who march under the flag "Society of Mary". They strove to implant and nurture in us the seeds of faith planted by our families that would enable us to be fruitful men in the same spirit of Mary.

The rector from 1944 – 1949 Fr Leo Evatt wrote, "Our task is to form men – Christian in heart, mind and conduct. Men who recognise the importance and dignity of the human person, understand the duties of justice and good will to all. Men who will challenge materialism and selfishness. The young man at Silverstream is trained in a manly pattern of living, a life lived in and through God's Grace." A good description of 'Sectare Fidem'.

The priests were more commonly known to us as 'the bosses'.....a community of men who were united in a common vision and mission in the education of young men. The image may subsequently have become seriously tarnished with the revelation of abuses. But the impact of their inspiration, dedication and commitment lives on, and is probably why many of us are gathered here today.

A reporter once said to Mother Teresa. "Mother, I look with great admiration at the wonderful work you and all your sisters are doing for the poor all around the world. My question is; 'How successful do think you are?'" Mother Teresa spontaneously replied; "In my life it is not a question of success, it is a question of faithfulness."

Jesus never used the word success because we can only be successful in the secondary pursuits of life. We can be successful in sport, in politics, in Hollywood, in education, in making money, or being in positions of power. But we do not use the word success for the primary pursuits of life, like; marriage relationship, prayer, carrying our cross, parenting, serving the poor, being an apostolic priest or growing old graciously. Jesus does not call us to be successful in these, but to be fruitful..... with a fruit that lasts. There are sprinters, middle distance runners, and stayers. We are all called as Christians to be stayers. Anyone can do something good for a short time. In the words of Jesus in this morning's Gospel, "I commission you to go out and bear fruit; fruit that lasts".



Another boarder reflecting on his journey wrote. "Silverstream was an exciting place to be because it opened up a world of what has been called second rate pursuits but to me, they were the first-rate pursuits. Rugby, running, boxing, tennis, down the river, smoking, breaking bounds just to prove you could do it and so on.

The second-rate pursuits were our faith, academic development, and I'd put music in there too. However unbeknown to me the seeds were sown and foundations laid for me to take on the load and develop and grow my own faith and for that I am eternally thankful for the efforts my parents made to send me to St Pats, Silverstream".

Cardinal Newman once wrote; "To live is to change, and to live fully is to have changed often". Although we were imbued with the classical principles of life and faith, and although we thought the world was our oyster as we left school, I doubt any of us would have predicted the massive changes and consequent challenges that we would be faced with in our lifetime. But as St Paul says "You will not be without any of the gifts of the Spirit while you are waiting. He will keep you steady until the last day, and God is faithful". They say there will be no passwords in heaven. But for us as we head for the other side of the grave our password remains. 'Sectare fidem'.