

Graduation Mass 2021

Homily by Fr Zygy Wloczek SDS

Congratulations to all our graduates here this evening! I hope that you are really proud of yourselves and your accomplishments in completing your schooling. But let's not forget all the people who also share in that pride — your mothers and fathers and brothers and sisters; your grandparents and friends – your teachers; all of whom took this journey with you in ways both seen and unseen.

So this is their day, too.

Furthermore, this is a time when we can pause to be thankful for the excellent system of Catholic Education we have in Australia for the last 200 years. It is an opportunity for us to express our gratitude for the thousands of people who have a part in running our schools.

Graduates, your parents will remember when they saw you as a small child when you were exposed to something new that you had never seen before or that you didn't understand. They saw your immediate curiosity. They could almost see the wheels inside your head spinning. You wanted to know more. You had a hunger to learn.

You moved through your early stages of learning and “graduated” from home to school and then years later came the milestone of graduating from primary to secondary school. Here we are now, celebrating an even more meaningful graduation which brings you into another important phase of your life.

Your studies and college formation have raised your awareness that living in 2021 we are not isolated from what happens in other cities, other states of Australia, or even on the other side of the world. We are physically isolated from many people, but we know that so many of today's challenges are borderless.

Throughout the ages we have stories of the lives of the saints and their challenges and struggles to achieve their goals and live a meaningful life. As Catholics, we have many such models in the lives of the saints and one of them is so known to you: Caroline Chisholm.

As you move into adulthood in this interconnected world, as a graduate from Chisholm Catholic College, in whatever profession or work you undertake, you will be challenged to find ways to make the world a better place. You will also be challenged to keep your Catholic beliefs and to continue to trust in God. Talk often with God. Speak to Him about your goals, pray that He will guide and support you. Perhaps you might reflect on the beautiful prayer of St Francis to form some of your goals in this regard:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.
Where there is injury, pardon.
Where there is doubt, faith.

Where there is despair, hope.
Where there is darkness, light.
Where there is sadness, joy.

As you communicate your goals to others, some may admire your idealism, but warn you to lower your sights, to scale back your ambitions, to settle for something less.

They may be worried that you're in for a letdown once you realize that it can take years and even decades for your best efforts to bear fruit.

We live in a culture that can communicate to us that our lives should be easy; that we can have everything we want without a whole lot of effort.

However, we all know that creating anything meaningful takes time.

So today, graduates, it is our intention to wish you well in the future: keep doing your best at whatever study and work you next take on. Keep giving of yourself to others in good and supportive friendships. Keep engaging with your community. Keep close to your mother, father and family. And above all, keep close to God. Success and achievement in our society is measured by graduation – not just from school and later on perhaps at University but from events and experiences.

We press on through events and life to get to the completion of whatever task is before us.

So now, at your graduation from secondary schooling, this is another challenge:

Be a lifelong learner.

Embrace curiosity as you did from childhood. Continue to set your goals in life and remember what you have learned at this school in this important phase of your Catholic schooling.

Can you do it?

Of course you can. It is Jesus' promise.

I am the vine, you are the branches says Jesus in the Gospel of Today.

Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.