

Mass for the Alumni of Aquinas Catholic College, Adelaide in the Jubilee Year and during the 75th Anniversary of the College's Founding.

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Today we celebrate the **Feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica** in Rome, often called the “*mother and head of all churches in the world.*” At first glance, this might seem a distant celebration — a feast about a building thousands of kilometres away, with marble walls and ancient stones. Yet this feast is not about architecture; it is about **identity**. It is about who we are as the living temple of God, and what we are called to build together — in faith, in hope, and in love.

As alumni of **Aquinas Catholic College**, gathered here in this **Year of Jubilee**, you come as part of a great communion — a body that extends beyond years and generations. Today we look both **backward** in gratitude and **forward** in mission: to remember that which formed us, and to rekindle the fire of the Holy Spirit that continues to shape us into living stones of God's dwelling place.

And yet today, this feast finds a particular resonance, in this **Jubilee Year of Mercy and Renewal**, and on the **75th anniversary of Aquinas College**, a community that has sought for three-quarters of a century to be both a temple of learning and a sanctuary of faith.

Aquinas College was founded by the Archdiocese with a dream — to unite **faith and reason**, which Pope St. John Paul II called the “*two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth*” (, N^o 1). The Dominican spirit of inquiry, the Jesuit love of formation, the Benedictine rhythm of prayer, the Marian attentiveness to the Word — over 75 years, these diverse charisms have shaped generations of scholars, professionals, and disciples.

The feast we celebrate today invites us to look at our lives and our institutions as **living temples**. How do we build, and rebuild, the dwelling place of God within and among us?

T. S. Eliot once wrote, in *Choruses from The Rock*:

“The Church must be forever building, for it is forever decaying within and attacked from without.” “and always being restored”

Eliot's insight is as true of the human person as it is of the Church: faith, like education, demands renewal. The Lateran Basilica has been restored countless times through the centuries; it bears the marks of fire, neglect, and human error — yet it endures. Likewise, our faith, our institutions, and our lives require ongoing dedication, restoration, and rededication.

In this Jubilee Year, the Church calls us to **return to the source** — to rediscover the mercy, mission, and mystery at the heart of our baptismal call. Jubilee is both

remembrance and rebirth: a time to recall the faithfulness of God and to recommit ourselves to justice and renewal.

For Aquinas College, 75 years of operation represent more than history. The 75 years are a living mosaic of countless stories — of mentors and students, of long nights of study and quiet prayer, of friendship, discovery, and service. Each alumnus and alumna gathered here is a chapter in that story, a “stone” in that spiritual edifice.

But this milestone also challenges us. Have our studies deepened our reverence for love and truth — or have we, in the rush of modern life, confused information for wisdom? Have our careers become vehicles of service, or monuments to self?

The prophet Ezekiel, in the first reading today (Ezekiel 47:1–12), envisions **a river flowing from the temple**, bringing life wherever it goes. The waters grow deeper, transforming the desert into a garden. This image, so rich and hopeful, speaks powerfully to an academic community: knowledge, when grounded in faith, should flow outward, not stagnate in private brilliance, but irrigate the world with compassion, justice, and renewal.

St. Catherine of Siena, that great Dominican mystic, once wrote, *“Be who God meant you to be, and you will set the world on fire.”* For 75 years, Aquinas has sought to form such people — minds aflame with truth, hearts open to love, and hands ready for service.

Yet we know that the world into which our graduates now go, and from which many of you return, is not the same one the College was founded by the Archdiocese to serve 75 yrs ago. Ours is an age of dislocation: technological acceleration, ecological fragility, cultural polarisation.

In such a moment, the dedication of the Lateran Basilica reminds us that the **Church’s permanence lies not in structures but in faithfulness**. The physical building may crumble; yet the temple of the Spirit endures. The challenge for each of us, especially those blessed with education and privilege, is to make our intellects a place of encounter, our workplaces a temple of justice, our relationships a sanctuary of mercy.

As the French philosopher and mystic **Simone Weil** observed in her 1947 volume, *Love in the Void: Where God Finds Us*, *“The danger is not that the soul should doubt whether there is any bread, but that by a lie it should persuade itself that it is not hungry.”* In other words, the hunger for meaning, the ache for the divine, remains. Our task then, as Christian intellectuals, educators, and alumni, is not to silence that hunger but to **cultivate it**, to remind a distracted world that wisdom begins in wonder, and wonder leads to worship.

In a way, this is what Aquinas College has done for 75 years: it has dared to hold together the mind and the heart, the library and the chapel, the laboratory and the altar. This is a rare and necessary courage — a sign that the Catholic intellectual tradition still has something vital to offer our times.

The Gospel for today (John 2:13–22) shows Jesus cleansing the temple, a dramatic reminder that dedication always involves purification. The Lord overturns the tables not to destroy, but to restore. In this, he challenges us to ask: what must be overturned in our own temples? What distractions, ambitions, or complacencies have crowded out the presence of God?

As we celebrate this Eucharist today, and as we honour 75 years of Aquinas College during this Jubilee Year, may we hear anew the Lord’s invitation: **“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”**

The temple he speaks of is his Body — and by our baptism, it is ours too. Let us be raised with him: minds renewed, hearts inflamed, and hands ready to build.

So may this Jubilee, this feast, and this gathering of alumni not only recall a proud history, but also inaugurate a new dedication, that Aquinas College, and all who have passed through its doors, may continue to be a **living temple of truth and love**, a source of living water for the world.

And may St. Thomas Aquinas pray for us — that what we learn, we may love; what we love, we may live; and what we live, may draw others to God.

+ Patrick O’Regan