

# **MAX 2018 NEW ZEALAND ADDRESS AT KING'S COLLEGE, AUCKLAND, 30<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2018.**

Nau Mai Haeremai, Tena Koutou Katoa.

E nga mana

E nga reo

E nga iwi o te motu

Rau rangatira ma

Tena koutou, tena koutou

Tena koutou katoa

- Mike Conroy
- Jim Gribble
- Peter Gabauer & Colleagues
- Catholic Men

Thank you for the honour of being able to be with you today and share some ideas focusing on the importance of creating opportunities to grow in your faith in this wonderful world of ours.

Since we have now well and truly set sail into the new millennium, it is possibly not co-incidental that the world is in the process of undergoing one of those periodic quantum shifts in history where dramatic structural change takes place. I commend all of you for putting aside a weekend of your valuable time to reflect on where you are at in your faith journey.

I have no monopoly on enlightenment and come to you as a seeker after truth and as a fellow Catholic Christian. We inevitably each learn from one another.

My task this morning is to provide you with some inspiration, which may be helpful to you when you leave this gathering.

To label our current experience of living as being in a revolutionary phase is accurate.

The Technological/Information/ Communication Revolution which is now flowing over us with growing rapidity, has crept up in a gathering way. Its components are changed ways of doing things in: learning systems and qualifications; technology and information/communication systems; leadership and decision making; family structures; cultural expression; global interaction of national groupings of people, with a range of other components including: religious expression, environmental issues, wealth/resource distribution and the list goes on.

## **(2) The jargon for these changes, is disruptors.**

Revolutions can either excite and stimulate people, or they can frighten them. It all depends on one's: belief systems, attitudes, values, confidence, and how much vision and energy one has got.

It makes no sense to try and do a King Canute by trying to stop the tide coming in. As the People of God, we have to get into the driving seat and shape the revolution so that family and personal human values are to the fore. We are capable of shaping and controlling our future and must be in there where the action is, contributing to decision making processes; seeking to influence outcomes, so that the sacredness of individuals is sustained. Our civilisation's health is dependent on getting sound Christian values, guided by spiritual considerations, into the foreground. If our Catholic brand of Christianity means anything, we decidedly must make an impact.

**(3)**

- 1. 'Am I the Way, Without Getting in The Way?'**
- 2. 'Success is not achieved except on the instalment plan.'**
- 3. 'You must be the change, if you wish to see it.'**

Very clearly, active leadership is fundamental if we are going to achieve the goals we set ourselves in making our Catholic parishes and schools strong evangelising components of the Church's evangelising mission. Anything is possible if you want to achieve it.

Fortunately, schools and some of our parishes are a major source of hope in our New Zealand Church. Large numbers of people's lives are clearly touched through their involvement in Catholic schools, and dynamic parishes, either as students, parents, teachers, staff, parishioners or through the wider community. De facto our schools are becoming the post-modern world's parishes, albeit different from what we have experienced for hundreds of years.

Catholic schools are now seen by many parents, and particularly Generations X and Y as desirable places educationally for a range of reasons, not the least being: their security and safety for children; their emphasis on spiritual values, quality and excellence; their family ethos and their pastoral care emphasis. The importance of the special character of our schools figures high on the radar screen of many parents.

While our age is firmly marked by secularisation and does not seem to have much concern for God, at the same time there is a thirst for the meaning of life and a resurgence of interest in things spiritual and the transcendent. **(4) This desire is a quest for God, even though it is not always recognised as such.**

The 1998 Vatican document: “The Catholic School on The Threshold of The New Millennium,” acknowledged that “the school is undoubtedly a sensitive meeting point for the problems that besiege this restless end of the millennium.” It goes on to say that our schools are not just for those who are active Church goers, even though this is an obvious priority. The reality of many Catholic people’s lives is that they are struggling to make sense of life amidst the competing influences in present day society. Our schools in particular are seen by the Vatican as having a big part in helping people see their way forward in the fog.

The essential nature of the Church, as the People of God, is a pivotal vehicle of God’s loving outreach to the world. **(5) The very nature of the Church is to be sent – which is what ‘mission’ means: sent to proclaim, sent to heal, sent to teach, sent to sanctify, sent to serve, sent to bring hope.**

In the Gospels Jesus defines his mission or purpose as ‘the preaching of the Good News’. Most of us do not go to far-away places where people have not heard of Christ. But all of us are charged with proclaiming the Gospel in such a way that the gospel penetrates our society. In this we imitate Jesus. The mission of every Christian is to be an ‘evangelizer’. (Reflection by Cardinal Thomas Williams, 2005).

The Vatican “General Directory for Catechesis” says, “The Church exists to evangelize,” that is “to carry forth the Good News to every sector of the human race, so that by its strength it may enter the hearts and renew the human race”. The missionary mandate of Jesus has various aspects, all interconnected.

- Proclaim (Mark 16 : 15)
- Make disciples and teach (Matthew 28 : 19-20)
- Be my witness (Acts 1 : 8)
- Baptise (Matthew 28 : 19)
- Do this in memory of me (Luke 22 : 19)
- Love one another (John 15 : 12)

In summary, evangelisation has to do with these essential themes; proclamation, witness, teaching, sacraments, love of neighbour. If we are to evangelise effectively, those involved must have this global vision, comprising the package outlined by the above themes.

Pope Paul VI was right on the button when he said: **(6) “The Gospel must be preached in language that is faithful, but also in language that is heard.”** Pope Francis is adamant that we must repackage the Good News in ways that post-modern people understand. He has led the way by using language and imagery that most people understand. He provides inspiration as a result.

The parable of the sower needs to be kept in mind when talking about evangelisation. It is not any easier in this post-modern world than it was for the early Christians – nothing new in that!! Jesus accepted that not everyone would rush to accept his Good News and the uptake would vary.

It is interesting that Jesus instructed his disciples, “go first among the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” This has interesting implications for Catholic community where upwards of eighty percent of families on average are not Church goers yet identify with Catholicism. **(7) Christ also warned us, “not to break the bent reed.” He also tells us: “what I want is mercy, not sacrifice.”** This bears reflecting on. If many people identify with Catholicism, but not with churchgoing, perhaps we need to reflect on what they see as

the heart of Jesus's message. You good men could lead the way with your vast life and educational experience.

Individuals are free. We can only offer people, not compel them to accept the message of Jesus. The story of the rich young man as told in Mark's Gospel 10:17-22 is worth keeping in mind. Jesus offered him a way of life – he did not compel him.

What a wonderful piece of inspiration is contained in one of our Catholic college's recent theme for the year, "Success is not final, failure is not fatal. It is courage to continue that counts".

It is my view, **(8) inspiration is the main driver of personal, national and international improvement.** We all need it all of the time, if we are to grow as individuals.

Men, whatever your age, identifying several pieces of inspiration, which you can make your own, that in turn can become your motivating personal dynamo are vitally important in your growth as a Catholic person. Otherwise your life will be one like a cork floating around on the ocean.

**(9) Pope Francis's statement that all humanity are daughters and sons of our Heavenly Father is all the more reason to make us compassionate.** Yes, we all need to help ourselves as best we can, but many individuals need a merciful hand-up when they are down-trodden and this is where we all come into the equation.

Essentially, part of our long-term vision as Christian people includes addressing and responding to the ruptures and dislocations in society both nationally and internationally.

**(10) “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world,” said Nelson Mandela.** This piece of wisdom is, no doubt, a major driver in your life.

Our New Zealand Prime Minister, John Key, was fond of saying, “Education is liberation” while it is also “a passport to a successful life”. Again, another piece of wisdom worth making your own.

**(11) People’s humanity is greatly enhanced when individuals have a personal life mission bigger than themselves.** With such a worldview, individuals are better able to navigate their lives in circumstances where dramatic global external changes occur. Despite the challenges there is much room for hope, since the human spirit is resilient and human talent and creativity are abundant. History teaches us to hope and hope is fundamental to a successful way of living. We are wise to avoid the merchants of doom who preach the reverse.

Today’s society needs plenty of understanding, rather than condemnation. It is too easy to focus on war, terrorism, violence, selfishness, greed and so on, which are all a tragic and unfortunate part of the human experience. Rather, we would be very wise to follow the wisdom of the Chinese proverb; “It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.”

**(12) Lifelong learning is the locomotive of history and effectively liberates people. It is the ultimate engine of fairness** and progress. As citizens of Aotearoa – New Zealand you are inexorably caught up with and participate in what is happening throughout the world.

The world’s people are crying out for new ideas, particularly those which are inspirational, and which touch their lives.

Being effective and making things happen is what they also want. Leadership qualities are, to some degree, part of most human beings. Without leadership from someone, nothing positive happens in our world. Leaders are people who deal in hope, who encourage others to see that tomorrow can be better than today.

As Christians, **(13) to be faithful to our religious calling, we must always be deeply focused on human flourishing,** which encourages people's wellbeing. As we know, "The glory of God is human beings fully alive."

Inspiring hope in our young people is today's major challenge. Hope is the soul of education and the dynamo of life. Christian hope directed to our loving God is never hoped for me alone, it is always hope for others. Such hope unites us in goodness, provides meaning and trust in life and stimulates us to educate one another in truth and love.

Being hopeful people presupposes we in contact with the Holy Spirit and have a prayer basis for what we do. Signs that people are in touch with the Holy Spirit are the fruits of the **(14) Holy Spirit in their lives; charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, long suffering mildness, faith modesty and chastity.** These are all hallmarks of an engaging male.

When the peoples of the world become less suspicious of one another and see each other as fellow global citizens, we will have a greater chance of living together harmoniously, rather than ring fencing ourselves in isolationism and fear. Alliances and collaborative relationships, if well-constructed and nurtured, will have a significant role in creating a sustainable, vibrant and peaceful world.

Essentially, Catholic people are called upon, in the words of the late Saint Pope John Paul II, “To be people who live with gratitude for the past, enthusiasm for the present and hope for the future,” a simple passport for a peaceful future in a world that looks after all its people.

We possibly need to remind ourselves that the people of God’s role in the world, or as the Letter to Timothy states, **(15) “God wants everybody to be saved.”**

In positioning ourselves as world citizens, and to address the inexorably changing our geo-political circumstances, we need to consider constantly transform ourselves, so we become fundamentally global in our outlook, accepting that we are in fact international citizens with responsibilities to our fellow global citizens, wherever they happen to be living on the planet.

In order to live in a functioning society individual, requires a set of ideas based on a spiritual and philosophical view of life, which is other-oriented. **(16) This means we have to expose ourselves to the wisdom of the world’s great thinkers, philosophers and leaders.** It also means coming to an understanding of the ideas and beliefs of the great civilizations, along with the world’s major religions and philosophies – wisdom and fresh ideas are generated in this way.

History and contemporary experience teach us that anarchy readily emerges in countries that lose their moral vision and moral purpose. When the social virtues of self-control, politeness, decency and the pursuit of human ideals are not taught and practised, a rapid dilution of social cohesion and disorder occurs in any society. cf. Venezuela / Syria.

International geo-strategic issues are dramatically growing in importance, and in many instances creating fear, anxiety and confusion in the minds of people. It is important to create a spiritual framework in our lives, simply because contemporary geo-strategic issues are now writ large in our psyche, as we wonder what sort of world we are growing up in. The exchanges in April between North Korea and the American Presidency is an example of this. Our sense of hope and personal wellbeing is closely tied to their awareness of the pressures on global ecology and the fear that human kind has reached a tipping point in terms of global sustainability.

It is only in collaborative interaction with others will we succeed in life. We are at our best when we recognize that one of us is never as strong as all of us. This approach acknowledges that nobody has a monopoly on enlightenment.

**(17) Environmental scanning is a technique now used by governments, non-profit organizations and businesses to positively face the future.** Information and other data reflecting trends, technology break-throughs, socio-economic and scientific advances are all the basis of this model.

Any successful organization knows it needs to open itself to outside influences and ideas. Open systems generally thrive, while closed systems ultimately fall prey to paralysis and meltdown. No doubt you always welcome ideas from other people and other organizations and do not fall prey to a silo mentality in your view of the world. Successful 21st Century enterprises draw in ideas, systems and processes from external environments, including the professions, other disciplines, and the world of enterprise. For instance, the Boeing Company and the Toyota Company are good examples of this.

How interesting it is that as political leaders seek to restructure the world's financial systems, the concept of the common good has dramatically come into focus. This is because human beings do matter and therefore **(18) respect for all human beings is a Christ-like activity, in fact a religious activity.**

In the 21st century business as usual just isn't sufficient anymore. Using the same innovative digital tools as the enterprise world uses, educators like us around the globe are developing cross-cultural education initiatives to bring the knowledge, resources and diverse working practices of the world into what we learn, enabling us to be excited about our future. Web sites, pod casts, blogs, videos, interactive forums, social media and other digital tools are the 21st century's progressive engine rooms. Our century is requiring us to be global citizens who are able to work collaboratively with people from diverse nations, cultures, religions and backgrounds, while thinking critically and solving problems. In our personal development, we are challenged to become leaders in whatever setting we find ourselves.

The challenges the world today faces, **(19) also call for resourcing enthusiasm amongst ourselves, individually and amongst others.** It is possible to energize hope in the spirits of everyone we come into contact with. We can be part of strengthening the bonds of human flourishing as we seek to serve society at large. This only happens when we deeply respect other human beings and recognise the sacred which is within each of us.

What we have been reflecting on is enough to scare a dog off its chain!! However, we cannot hold ourselves back from necessary change and we must always have a spirit of hopefulness in our view of life.

**(20) We all know just how quickly people become sparked by effective leadership, inspiration, action and enthusiasm.** When we get together in groups we often have most of the answers already in our heads, to the questions we have about effective evangelisation and parish/school relationships. We only need to have an effective process which is a vehicle for sparking ideas in a think-tank type setting. At the same time, with a little co-ordination, good ideas and practices would be able to be moved around from one region of the country to another. I would like to spend a little extra time elaborating on the importance of leadership.

**(21) Whatever humanizes, divinizes. This is a wonderful, basic, Catholic belief.** Anything that makes us wiser, braver, more intelligent, more loving, more generous, more fully human makes us more God-like. How extraordinary that idea is. We can apply it to students and to ourselves

Effectively, our schools and parishes are called to echo the statement of St. Irenaeus in the second century AD who proposed that “the glory of God is the human person fully alive.” We need to know well the world of today and strategize to make it more fully alive. Only effective leadership can develop and deliver the vision.

Nothing happens without leadership and to be effective, it needs to be found at every level of school and parish organizations. There can be no leadership without optimism, along with a good dose of faith and hope, since its goal has to be to strive for outstanding performance. Leadership is about being able to create a new, implement change and sustain an organization’s development. At rock bottom leadership effectiveness is predicated on personal integrity of leaders at every level, and if any individual loses it they are a goner.

**(22) Leadership is about releasing the human spirit to deliver human flourishing.** Leaders believe in people, create confidence and a sense of possibility within their communities. They communicate vision, direction and possibilities; they inspire, motivate and capture the hearts, souls and minds of those they lead.

There is no doubt, leadership works through evoking positive emotions, storytelling, and an ability to connect with people's ongoing daily experiences. If you look at the reverse of what I am saying, where leaders emit a negative register, are irritable, touchy, domineering, and cold, such individuals repel others. **(23) Nobody wants to work with a grouch or an odd fellow.** You are all aware that a moody boss delivers a moody organization, simply because, whether we like it or not, the boss sets the climate, and everyone knows it.

All of this puts a lot of responsibility on you as leaders in terms of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management.

The contemporary experience of today's leaders is teaching us that leadership is not so much an official position as a way of doing things. People want to be consulted, and want to work collaboratively with leaders, if at all possible. This is the new reality in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

To be successful we have to be able to persuade people there are better ways of doing things and then seek to convince them they can be: optimistic, honest and develop the skills, expertise and flair to deliver positive change. For this to happen, boldness, courage and an ability to weather storms are vital ingredients.

If we are to be effective for our young people and their families, **(24) we have to be able to generate a sense of belonging and connection to the school/parish and what they stand for.** In turn, this means showing a human face of our Catholic beliefs in the way we treat everyone in our school/parish communities. It means looking at what are the real needs and tasks our Christian community can engage in. A tangible Catholic community spirit then will emerge.

### ***VISION***

The Book of Proverbs in the Jewish Scriptures is emphatic when it cautions, **(25) “Without a vision the people perish.”** Sometimes when we are going about our daily work we lose focus on what is essential, yet without a geo-strategic focus we will simply get lost in the ever-increasing complexities of the world. We need an image in our minds of what we would like to see in order to navigate life successfully.

### ***INSPIRATION***

Inspiration is not a commonly found commodity. It is, however, found in the behaviour of mentors and achievers. It is also found amongst those who challenge the status quo and show others how they can become ambitious for themselves, their families and for their communities. It is what motivates people to improve themselves.

### ***HOPE***

Hope is deeply rooted in the human spirit and provides the basis for inspiration. We all refer to it often and are energised by it. **(26) Hope is much more than optimism. It is based on the ability to seek out something because it is good and truthful.** Leaders of substance know that providing hope for those they lead is fundamental to their success. Leaders who are purveyors of hope know that the power of an idea never dies. Well-crafted words, followed by action, enables

change to take place in people's lives. Words can be cheap, yet hope-filled words delivered in an engaging way have the capacity to inspire and lift lives.

**(27) Hope is an eternal flame, which challenges those who see disadvantage as a destiny, which is a dead-end game.** Irrespective of what one believes about the reason for human existence, hope is always the beacon that energises life.

Inspiring hope in other people is today's major challenge. Hope is the soul of education and the dynamo of life. Christian hope directed to our loving God is never hope for me alone, it is always hope for others. Such hope unites us in goodness, provides meaning and trust in life and stimulates us to educate one another in truth and love.

**(28) All too often people's lives are mired in blame and fruitless negativity. Our task is to provide them with a revivifying hope.** Our Catholic intellectual heritage is strongly built on the combination of intellect and hope.

Before I finish, I would like to place before you of some statements which Pope Francis has provided for us within recent times, since they provide some context for solving some of the world's problems.

- "Work so that the world becomes a community of sisters and brothers who respect each other and take care of one another."
- "Trust in the infinite possibilities which God's love holds out for us."
- "Scrutinise the signs of the times, to try and adapt to its ways and methods."

- “God is not afraid of the new . . . that is why he is continually surprising us, opening our hearts and guiding us in unexpected ways”
- Let us remember that our lives will be judged by how well we have carried out the Corporal Works of Mercy, which were the centre of the Recent Year of Mercy.

Shakespeare wrote in *The Merchant of Venice*, (29) **“The quality of mercy is not strained – it droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath. It is twice blessed; it blesses him that gives and him that takes.”**

It is worth reminding ourselves just what the Corporal Works of Mercy actually are, i.e.

- To feed the hungry
- To give drink to the thirsty
- To cloth the naked
- To shelter the homeless
- To visit the sick
- To bury the dead

At the height of the European refugee crisis in the last quarter of 2015 and which continues today, it was the leaders of those countries that demonstrated practical mercy in taking in refugees which gained plaudits from the world community.

Pope Francis’s statement that all humanity are daughters and sons of our Heavenly Father is all the more reason to ensure we are compassionate. Yes, we all need to help ourselves, as best we can, but many individuals need a merciful hand-up when they are down-trodden and this is where we all come into the equation.

As a result of Pope Francis's leadership, the world is a better place for the flag of mercy and humanity he proudly flies.

**(30) We have a mission to spread God's love. This requires us to be the Gospel, the Good News, in the lives of those we interact with, by using our intelligence, experience, spirit and heart.**

Let us not take our foot off the accelerator of progress and development. If we ever slow down on our commitment to constant improvement we will start to go backwards. I do not believe that will ever happen since I trust in your strength, energy and drive to continuously make sound progress in all that you do. Let us be enthusiastic, joyful followers of Christ who bring the Good News of the Gospel to those whom we serve.

The most important thing in our lives, is to believe in a noble cause, greater than yourself. The late Senator John McCain was a great example of just that. He was greatly honoured as a result. We must be committed to defend and support every human being or as Sir Bill English said in his valedictory speech in Parliament, **(31) "it is every Government's role to alleviate human misery wherever this is possible"**. I am sure you are equal to the task.

Thank you for the opportunity to share some thoughts with you. **(32) I wish you well as you continue to be involved in 'touching eternity', by who you are and what you do.**

Sir Patrick J. Lynch KNZM, QSO  
25<sup>th</sup> September 2018