

Anne Bamford

This is a beginning Mass not an ending Mass.

When you live on the other side of the world from a lot of your family you really do not like to say good bye but instead you try to focus on when you will meet again and the future. This occasion is no different. I am not going to the other side of the world only the other side of the Thames River and although those of you who know the rivalry between the different sides of the Thames will know that that can feel a world away, I will make sure in my new role that my faith and my knowledge and belief in the wonderful work of Southwark will be very much part of the future work I do. So this Mass is not a goodbye occasion but rather an opening of another wonderful year.

I will not speak for long as in Amigo Hall there are very nice cakes waiting, and we won't have any speeches there, but I feel it is important to really thank some people.

I would like to thank Archbishop Peter and the other Bishops in the Diocese - Bishop Pat, and Bishop Paul the elder and Paul the younger as they refer to themselves.

My appreciation is not just for the wonderful and moving Mass (and thank you also to the priests who concelebrated mass today) but I really want to thank them for their continuous support I have felt as Director. We are truly blessed to have the Archbishop and Bishops as they put education first, second and third in everything that happens in the Diocese. We have an Archbishop who risks the wrath of his peers by putting the Headteachers' Conference before going to the Bishops' Conference. We have Bishops who prioritise visiting every school in their area and really getting to know the school leaders and governors. People who take the time to write to the Secretary of State or to meet with education ministers to help to steer them in the right direction. Who take the time to really understand education and to be visionaries. They also have very good educational filters being able to effectively sift out a lot of educational nonsense and focus on the important things in education. They know that children need a well-rounded education, that education needs to be visionary, that the judgement of how well our schools is doing can be seen in the eyes of the children and young people attending our schools and that ethics, values and faith will always be of greater

long term benefit to children than phonics, SPAG or grades 1-9. Under their shepherding, the schools are excelling and this is something we should all feel very proud of. They realise that our pupils are not vending machines. There is an irony that while people are struggling to make bots and robots that act and think like people, much of education is trying to make people who act and think like robots. We rarely have the opportunity to thank in Communion the spiritual and educational leadership provided by the Archbishop and Bishops so can you warmly thank them now.

Equally, I would like to personally thank the Headteachers and Chairs of Governors in the Diocese.

I may not have been the usual suspect when I was chosen to be the Director but from the outset I was very warmly welcomed and fully supported. Perhaps they may have questioned this when we started having fancy dress at the Headteachers' conference or when we held mock Olympics, Elvis-themed dinners or 1940's war rations, but they have always been generous, not only in the thousands of pounds they have given to charity but in their time, advice, and help for one another. I can honestly say, that whenever I have asked a Headteacher and a governing body to support another school they have always said yes. Without naming schools, as most of the headteachers in the cathedral today would know the vulnerable schools, they have gathered like a protective pack to shelter and they have been really prepared to roll their sleeves up to support the most vulnerable school and although I have often heard, "How did you get me into this Anne?" I know that the answer to this question is that they will not stand by and see children not getting the best education and that they are driven by an overwhelming love of education and of seeing children succeed. Being a headteacher is not just a job but a vocation. It would be easy to say we are one happy family who always sing in perfect harmony like our wonderful choirs today, but just as we collaborate, we challenge. These challenges cause the friction that sparks the electricity and allows us to create the space to innovate and forces us to reflect, to question, and to change.

As with our governors, the Headteachers believe in the deep and personal responsibility of leadership. You cannot 'put it on' or pretend to be a good leader. Your leadership is evident in the values you apply everyday, no matter what the pressure. People often say, even inspectors, that you can feel something different

when you enter a school in the Diocese. It is not **what** we do but rather **the way we do things**. In the best examples, there is complete congruence between what we believe and what we do, from the most mundane to the most significant.

Many people outside the Diocese do look at our Diocese with some envy. They wonder why our schools are doing so well and why we win so many awards, and if you don't know what we have won in just the last year alone, please read our annual report as we should not boast too loudly among ourselves. There is no secret in this success... we have wonderful leaders, who are energetic, who inspire and who truly believe in what they are doing. That includes both our paid leaders, the Headteachers, Deputies and so on throughout the school, but also our unpaid leaders, the governors, parents and children and young people who take on leadership roles in our schools. I want to especially thank the members of our Education Excellence Board who have helped to coordinate this Mass and ensure all the preparation of young people behind the scenes. Can I ask that the pupils and young people present give a round of applause to thank our amazing teachers, staff, leaders and governors?

I want to pay a special tribute to the children and young people who are leaders in our schools.

Whether they are formally recognised as being prefects, captains, head pupils or members of the Student Councils or peer chaplains or some of informal leaders, people who while largely unrecognised, lead other young people by being positive examples or role models that allow others to follow. Every time I visit a school I am truly inspired by the young people I meet.

I will let you into two secrets...

Firstly, if I was ever getting a bit angry, depressed, frustrated, or a bit short tempered in my job, my PA Donna, would always send me on a school visit. Perhaps that was to get me out of her hair, but I think it was because she knew that every time I was in a school, I would come back inspired, filled with faith, re-energised. The other secret, is that I said there was not going to be Mass today at all unless young people came and were the main parts of the Mass... so thank you for all coming or we would not have had this lovely Mass. Can I particularly thank our readers, our servers, our leaders of the bidding prayers, our welcomers and

of course our stunning choirs. I think it would be appropriate for a round of applause for all the young people here today and the superb job they have done.

Often in the press, the stories about young people stress the negatives,

The costs of raising children in London, young people in gangs, the falling standards and the tendency to say of course that we were always more polite, clever, more hard working and so on than the young people of today and millennials are often labelled as being selfish disloyal, with short attention spans, caring more about their phones than people and I could go on. But when I look at young people in our schools and especially the wonderful members of our Diocesan Youth Executive, I believe that the children and young people are inspirational, energetic, innovative, caring, believers in equality and I am in awe of what they have achieved in their lives so far. Think of how entrepreneurial they are not to raise money for themselves but for literally hundreds of charities... Young people who make art, who singing beautifully or play an instrument, who make profound speeches at assemblies, who compose the most meaningful of prayers, the numbers who volunteer to go take other young people to Lourdes, who share in Flame, who challenge knife crime, who attend youth missions, who accept difference and who promote the Catholic social teaching by arguing passionately for respect, who move me to tears of amazement.

A researcher named Charles Horton Cooley back in 1900 did a famous research study in Texas where he administered a so called 'potential' test which was designed to find out who would be brilliant at school and who would not. He did not tell anyone else the results of the test, only the teachers.

The teachers he told which pupils scored highly on the 'brilliance' test and which did not. In fact, there was no brilliance test and the pupils had been randomly assigned to the brilliant group or the non-brilliant group. Remember only the teachers knew. But can you guess what happened? The randomly assigned children in the brilliant group started to perform much, much better than those in the other group. If we believe genuinely that all of us and all the pupils we work with are in the brilliant group because all of us are deeply loved and created in the image of Christ, then they will all flourish.

There are two final groups I would like to thank because these two groups of people help me to flourish and make it possible for me to do my job.

The first in my Husband Matt and my family. Deliberately, they like to keep behind the scenes as the job of Director of Education in a Diocese is an all-encompassing job and without a place of refuge and place to be yourself, somewhere to throw your shoes off, wear tracksuit bottoms and eat fish and chips on a Friday you would not be able to do this job. My family provides that support and love and they are also very generous in sharing me with thousands of pupils, teachers, headteachers, and governors and so on and I thank them for their patience and for their belief that what I do makes a difference. And I apologise for any time I should have been there and I was not.

The other group are all my colleagues, past and present from the Education Commission.

While we will also have a more private celebration later in the week and I can thank them individually then, I feel it is important to pause and think about the amazing job they do. They are often like ducks on a pond, wonderfully calm on the surface and paddling like crazy under the water. Or perhaps today they can be likened more to the bright yellow minions that while quite unnoticed simply make sure things happen. But pause for a minute to think about the size of the Diocese: We are larger than most local authorities and larger than all academy trusts in the country and yet we have staff numbers that are a tenth or even less than these organisations per school. Behind the scenes for this Mass today, the Education Commission staff have literally arranged everything. But it does not stop there, they make sure millions of pounds of building work occur effectively and seamlessly every year; they are part of every appointment of leaders in the all schools and in every foundation governor appointment; they ensure that Religious education, chaplaincy and spirituality are the high quality core of all we do; they arrange conferences and courses; they monitor all school data and finance and provide a lighthouse system warning us of potential dangers; they are developing innovations in teacher recruitment education and retention; they lead in areas of international, national, regional and local education; they are always willing to innovate and create and try new things... but above all they deeply, deeply care about each other and about all of you. They will be there with a phone call, and visit or words of encouragement when you receive the dreaded Ofsted call. They will be on hand when you don't know what to or when the unexpected happens and you want legal, media advice or just some words of

support. One of them will know when you lose a loved one or when you are experiencing a hard time. They will make you laugh or put an arm around your shoulder. Put simply, they are here for you and for me and for each other so please thank them.

I said when I had my induction Mass in the cathedral almost exactly six years ago, that I felt very, very small.

We all still very, very small when we are placed in the scale of this wonderful Cathedral, even I guess the Archbishop, the bishops, the Chars of Governors, the Headteachers, the Education Commission staff and of course all the young people here today feel quite small. But remember when we face the Son, we are all possible of casting enormous shadows. We may feel small, but we can be giant in terms of the influence we make. We can be like giant solar panels catching the light and turning it into energy.