

My dear parents, staff and young people of St John's Academy

I am sorry I can't be with you to share this evening with you. As you will know, my father, Leslie, recently died and I am unable to attend as his funeral is today, St Andrew's day. I ask you, of your charity, to pray for the repose of his soul.

From 2009, when St John's Academy was established, until the official opening in December 2011, and then throughout the 5 years since, the work of this Catholic community has been flourishing. As your bishop, it has been a pleasure to see the community grow and develop under the leadership of Mrs May and now Mr Hagney.

On 20 December 2011, Mr John Swinney, now our Deputy First Minister, officially opened the building with Cardinal O'Brien blessing and dedicating it in honour of St John the Baptist. Today, I renew this blessing - not only on the building but on each person here today, on each adult and child in the school and on each family in the community of St John's Academy.

I am grateful to Perth and Kinross Council for providing this fantastic facility for the Catholic community within Perth and Kinross. Living, loving communities are made better by the facilities it shares, but of course, the facilities do not replace the love we have for one another. A Catholic community is one which mutually shares this love - which is first of all Almighty God's gift to us. This truly is how such a Catholic community thrives.

I want to congratulate the staff, the children and all the parents and carers of St John's Academy on your 5th birthday. Together, we celebrate the school's many achievements which build on a long tradition of Catholic education within Perth and look forward to a successful future.

May I finally say that it is fitting that the school is rededicated on this Feast of St Andrew. Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist who inspired, formed and prepared him for the coming of the Messiah. John taught Andrew how to Seek the Good! With John's blessing, Andrew left everything to follow Jesus, learning (experiencing) the truth of his message as the gift of eternal life. He journeyed in the company and the presence of the Lord, and that divine presence remains at the heart of our faith community today.

So may the grace of the Lord fill your hearts and may God bless you all,

+ Stephen
Bishop of Dunkeld
St Andrew's Day 2016

