



**Presentation | Archbishop Aspinall  
125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary St Margaret's Anglican Girls' School  
7 February 2020**

Malachi 3.1-4  
Psalm 84  
Hebrews 2.14-18  
Luke 2.22-40

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Today we celebrate the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of St Margaret's Anglican Girls School.

The Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple is a good day to mark this wonderful milestone.

We just heard the story from Luke's Gospel about how Mary and Joseph brought the child Jesus to the temple to present him to the Lord. When they had done what the law required they returned to their own town of Nazareth in Galilee and we're told that Jesus 'grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him' (Luke 2.40).

All the information we have about Jesus as a child comes from this chapter of Luke. The only other story comes next. Jesus was 12 when his parents took him to Jerusalem for the Passover Festival, the biggest festival of the year. After the party, on the way back to Nazareth, Mary and Joseph discovered Jesus wasn't with the group. When they can't find him anywhere they went back to Jerusalem and, after three days, at their wits end, they found him in the temple listening to the teachers and asking them questions. Mary and Joseph are not impressed.

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The story ends with a verse very similar to the end of today's gospel. 'Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and with people' (Luke 2.52).

The four ways in which Jesus grew (in wisdom, in stature, in favour with God and with people) are a kind of framework for education. In many ways this is the framework that's at the heart of St Margaret's. These four dimensions of growth point to the holistic, comprehensive, well-rounded education St Margaret's provides.

The first is wisdom. Isn't it interesting that Luke doesn't say Jesus grew in knowledge and skills. After all a lot of our time in school is spent acquiring knowledge and learning skills – knowing about and knowing how to are both very important. But there's something even more important, more fundamental, and that's wisdom.

Some people are really, really clever, super intelligent. They know more than just about anyone else. But if that knowledge is not used wisely it can do more harm than good. You only have to look at the harm human beings have caused to our environment with our technology. Or look at the hurt that can be caused by using computers, tablets and smart phones in the wrong ways.

Alongside academic pursuits, wisdom is also nurtured and cultivated through the arts. Music, drama and the visual arts allow us to see things from other perspectives, to walk in another's shoes, to develop sensitivity, compassion, understanding.

Growing in wisdom is really important – maybe more important even than knowledge and skills. Jesus grew in wisdom.

Jesus grew in stature. The basic meaning of stature is that Jesus grew physically.

A great deal depends on our physical well-being. A good diet, keeping fit, maintaining strength and flexibility are all basic to our quality of life. We can't all be Olympic champions, and we can't always and forever avoid illness or disability. But to the extent we can be, being physically healthy helps us live a fulfilling life.

St Margaret's has always encouraged girls to reach their potential in sport. There are some great stories over the years about some SSA sisters joining in with the girls. In the 1970s, Sister Philippa loved to play tennis. 'This she did with great gusto, [writes one former student] tucking her habit into her knickers and revealing very white and unshaved legs. She would be red-faced with exertion, veil and Dunlop Volley's flying' (Annie O'Dowd's recollections in

Geise, 2012, p.281). There's an image of growing in stature that's hard to forget!

Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature - and in favour with God.

God can seem a bit on the outer these days. It's not terribly fashionable to believe in God and to go to church, maybe especially for young people. In many places our churches seem to be full of old people. But we shouldn't sell them short for that.

Simeon and Anna who appear in today's gospel story were both old – Anna was 84 -but they are the ones who recognise who Jesus is – the Lord's Messiah, the one Israel has been waiting for, the one who will bring about God's promises for the future, the one who is the light of the world. Simeon and Anna are able to recognise Jesus because they had spent their whole lives in touch with God, and in the temple, in worship.

Someone once said 'It's hard to doubt the reality of God when you meet someone who lives in God's presence.' Simeon and Anna were like that.

In many ways the sisters of the Society of the Sacred Advent are also like that. They have spent their lives in God's presence. Because of that they were able to start St Margaret's School way back in 1895 and because of SSA's unique ethos and charism they have made an amazing contribution to education in Queensland for 125 years.

That many St Margaret's girls have gone on in their lives to have significant impacts in all sorts of fields all around the world, stems back to a few SSA sisters and their relationship with God. Don't underestimate how important that is.

Jesus grew in relation to God.

Wisdom, stature, in relation to God, and, fourth, Jesus grew in relation to other people.

We don't live as atomised individuals. We live in relationships. We are who we are because of relationships. We live in families, in communities, in nations, in a global village. We don't work or play alone, We work and play in teams, with companions, colleagues.

The quality of our relationships and interactions with others makes all the difference between a life that's full of joy and a life of drudgery and disappointment.

St Margaret's understands this well. In all sorts of ways the School cultivates teamwork, cooperation, service. Girls are nurtured to respect others and treat people with courtesy.

Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and with people. In those few words lie the roots of an educational philosophy that has made a remarkable contribution in Queensland and beyond.

In the marvellous history of St Margaret's 125 years, Madonna King sums up well the core vision: 'to put the love of God above all else and love of one's neighbour as our constant theme, to produce people of fine character and scholarship and to develop each to their fullest potential; and to engender courtesy at all times and respect for all...' (King, 2020, 242).

From the beginning the SSA sisters were determined that girls would have opportunities to come to faith in Christ, that there would be academic excellence, that the girls would be keenly encouraged in cultural pursuits - music and art and drama- as well as in sports. And service to others was integral to the character development which was the focus of an SSA education.

The State of Queensland and the Church in Queensland owe a great deal to the sisters of the Society of the Sacred Advent. Theirs has been a singular contribution to the education of girls for 125 years. And driving that contribution from beginning to today is the passion for justice, well-being and fullness of life born of faith in Jesus Christ that is the heart of the sisters' community life.

Congratulations St Margaret's and thanks be to God for the SSA sisters and for the Jesus the Christ who is their, our and the world's light.

Geise, Ray

2012 The Sisters of the Society of the Sacred Advent and their contribution to Educating Girls since 1895

King, Madonna

2020 Inspired to Fly. 125 Years of St Margaret's, 1895-2020. QUP