



## St Joseph's Theological Institute (RF) NPC

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### Homily: SJTI Opening Mass 2019

The image of a lamp or light is one that is used often in the scriptures and symbolises the energy, the life force, spirit that is within each person. Jesus notes that this lamp should be placed on a stand so that people may see it.

If we take this paraffin lamp, for example, and we imagine that it is dark in this chapel; in order for everyone to benefit from the light it would be best placed in the centre of us all and high up. By so doing the majority of us would be able to benefit. If we were to cover it nobody would benefit. Furthermore, in order to get the maximum amount of light we would need to extend the cord inside. This will mean though that more energy will be expended and the paraffin would burn up quickly. But more people would benefit. Thus light is better experienced by people if it is uncovered and using the maximum amount of energy. We will also have to ensure that we have more paraffin available so that the lamp will not go out.

We are these lamps, these lights. We have energy, life force, spirit. Pope Francis encouraged the young people at the end of the recent world youth day to expend their energy for the mission. The mission being the evangelisation of people. This is our motto as Oblates, the evangelisation of the poor, the poor have been evangelised. I suppose many of our congregations were founded for the service of God's people. Diocesan priests, like Don Bosco, were there to assist the bishop to evangelise and be of service to the people. Lay people are also meant to participate in the mission of Christ, to make him known to people. We are all called to expend ourselves for the mission.

In this Institute we are all on a mission. We need to expend ourselves for the mission. The energy we have been given needs to be used at this time for what we are called to do. We have a wonderful model for education ministry in Don Bosco. As a student he would spend much time studying. He would work on the farm as a boy and then spend his nights studying and learning so that he might one day become a priest and so be able to help others. As an older student he would spend much of his time in service of others. He would use the gift of his mind to help others in their studies.

As a priest and educator he decided that he would only sleep for 5 hours each day so that he might be constantly available to the needs of others. He went around the city gathering young boys in order to help them to have a better chance at life. He worked tirelessly to provide an

environment for them that they might grow and develop into fine young men who would have a great impact on society.

So, we too here at the Institute need to expend ourselves, use our light, our energy, our spirit. As students the mission is to study and prepare yourselves adequately to assist people in their lives. This does not mean that you may not already begin to assist. Like Don Bosco you could help others who may find the studies a bit difficult. You may assist in spending some energy in assisting in the various groups of the Institute or the various functions that happen in the Institute. By contributing in this manner you are expending energy so that your light may shine brightly.

As staff in the Institute, we are to expend energy so that the students have the best experience of learning. We are to use our energy to create an environment that is conducive to learning with the goal in mind to help the students be the best they can be. Not only so that they do well academically but also that they can prepare themselves adequately to continue the mission now and in the future.

Yes, we need to take time to replenish the energy. Jesus did so, Don Bosco did so. We are also aware that one day the fuel will burn out but which would we rather: A life that was spent conserving energy and not providing light to as many people as we can or a life that was burning brightly so that many can experience the light? Let us all strive to expend our energy for the mission and to place the lamps, our lives on stands always burning enough fuel so that many people may benefit from the life force, spirit we have been given.