

Principal's Message – September 4th, 2020

Good afternoon to all members of the Loreto Normanhurst community. It's lovely to be with you today. I'd like to begin by welcoming back and acknowledging that our Year 12 students have returned this week after the period of HSC trial examinations. And as I said to the girls, we're so immensely proud of the way in which they took on the challenge of those examinations, and really showed some grit, some fortitude and a real solidarity, I guess, in how they approached the exams. We wish you well girls in the ongoing challenges of the weeks ahead.

I come to you right now from the gymnasium, where we just concluded the most beautiful liturgy and rite of passage to symbolize and witness the handover of student leadership from the class of 2020 to the class of 2021. Of course, our Year 12 girls haven't graduated yet from Loreto, but they have today handed over the leadership of the student body to Grace Gillies, our incoming school captain, and Lillian Dean and to the entire cohort of the class of 2021. We saw a really beautiful, symbolic handover in the handing over of the light of Christ, of course, and all the hope that comes with that.

And the class of 2021 will lead our community in what will be the year of Felicity across all the Loreto schools in Australia. The girls have discerned in the lead-up to today as a whole year group their theme leading into 2021 and throughout 2021, to really guide the path of leadership. I thought I'd share it with you today because it's quite a powerful one, and that is that "with hopeful and uplifting spirits, we ignite joy in the hearts of others." There's no doubt in our minds that the girls most definitely do that every day and will continue to do so.

We've had a big couple of weeks since I was lastly speaking with you. You might have seen a few things happening around the grounds, through our social media platforms. Just on Wednesday we had a really joyful and very different way of awarding the Queen of the Track, the fastest girl in the school. Of course, we couldn't have our Athletics – and track and field – Carnival last term and were unable to hold an alternative of a full carnival. However, we were pleased to be able to have that Queen of the Track race out here in our beautiful oval.

So congratulations to Sophie Kavanagh, Year 10 Ward, for being awarded the Queen of the Track for 2020 and she was in mighty good form. It was a very speedy, fast race and I am always in admiration of our athletes and sportswomen and was most definitely so on Wednesday at the Queen of the Track.

There's also been a whole lot in the world of writing and the world of communications. Last week, girls from Years 5 through to 10 took part in Write a Book in a Day. I was walking through the library and felt very blessed to have spent some time with a few groups. That was the question I asked them, how on earth do you write a book in a day? They gave me a few little reflections and at that point they'd had two hours together and they already had reflected on the importance of being really clear and open in their communications with one another, having a solid plan they felt was important and really thinking it through and then delegating those tasks so that everybody had a role to play. I've not yet read any of the books that they wrote in that day, but I look forward to doing so and we'll hear a lot more about that no doubt as the weeks and months ahead go. Congratulations to all girls who took part in that and who really showed some vulnerability in the creative process of writing and illustration and building and putting together a story in a day. It was quite remarkable to witness for the brief time in which I was with them.

Also, I'd like to acknowledge and congratulate Erika San Diego, who is in Year 8 Aston House. Erika took part in - as did a few of our girls actually - in a competition open to all members of the Hornsby

and Kuring-gai local area to create and design a logo for a new publication, the 'Hornsby Kuring-gai Post,' the first edition of which actually lands today so you might see it in your local neighbourhoods if you're local to the Hornsby and Kuring-gai areas. Our Mary Word girls, the girls who are part of the editing and writing team of the Mary Word student newspaper, were given the invitation to take part in that. And Erika submitted an application and it was a very beautiful logo. She was successful in winning that competition and really importantly in being of service to the local community, because that logo that she created will be the logo for this local paper. It is so important, isn't it, as we know, and as you will know joining us from various parts of Australia and beyond, how important it needs to keep connected to our local community, to know what's going on, to share the stories of one another. We are thrilled that Erika's logo was chosen to connect this local Hornsby Kuring-gai area. If you see it, you might note the beautiful inspiration she took from gum leaves so prominent in our area, and the hands that uphold the design. When I asked her about her design process, she told me they symbolize that sense that we lift one another up when we belong to the community and how important that is; words that we've heard reflected on very powerfully in this afternoon's liturgy as well.

There's been a lot happening at the school in the last weeks, months and years of course. We've been here for such a long time, haven't we? Just over 123 years and so much has changed yet so much remains the same and what remains the same is a strong grounding in values and our strong roots, if you like, in being women for others and being people for others; in understanding who we are and where we come from and that we are all here to put our gifts in loving and responsible service for one another. Over these 123 years so much has changed and so much has evolved, and that identity - the little nuances that make us who we are - has grown over time, grounded very firmly, as I said, in our values and our strong mission to educate young women so that they may go on to serve the local community. So I wanted to just share with you, and with all in our community, that we've been undergoing some project work over the last 18 months to ensure that what we know about who we are is expressed in how we share that story and this wonderful story of a Loreto education to others. It's important that our communications and our visual expression of who we are keep pace with an increasing, changing shift to a digital world, while always remaining true to that expression of who we are.

What hasn't changed, of course, is our mission, as I said, our commitment to grow independent, articulate women of compassion and integrity. And last year we undertook a project with an external agency just to get a little bit more insight into what is it that makes us, 'us' and ensure that we remain true to that, while also ensuring that we're communicating in a way that shares that story with others. In this project we undertook a really comprehensive immersion and discovery piece in partnership with the agency, and we had workshops in interviews with various segments and snapshots of our community students, staff, parents, ex students etc. I thought that today, I'd share with you some of those insights and how you might start to see over the next few weeks and months, a different way of expressing who we are. Of course, as I say, who we are has not changed and that deep grounding of values and mission has not changed.

And what the project highlighted for us, is the importance in our community of being built and centred around love and respect. That we believe that compassionate nudges and challenges help everyone to grow, adults and young people alike. That we find our true selves in this place of love and of challenge, in this place here at Loreto Normanhurst; that girls grow into their sincerest and most honest and true self and can feel a space where they can unapologetically be themselves. That we're a school, effectively, of compassionate warriors, as we like to term it - brave, confident, modern progressive, forward looking and forward thinking activists who are ready to take on their

place in the world and to use their gifts, their talents, their passion and pursuits in loving and responsible service. And that we are grounded and founded in a most compelling and ever-relevant truth of Mary Ward; her fight against inequality and her challenge and legacy to always stand up against low expectations, knowing that we have been loved and formed in God's image and likeness.

So as a result of all of this work, we've been developing a visual toolkit that will, as I say, ensure that we capture the essence of what it means to be a Normo girl, what it means to be a member of this community, whether it be as student, parent, staff member, ex student or in any other form and friend of Loreto Normanhurst, so that we can communicate who we are in that spirit and personality that is truly unique to Loreto Normanhurst. So you might start to see that over time and I just wanted to give a little bit of the context and background to our community to understand where this has come from and what it may well mean, and of course we'll continue to share into explore that together.

I was inspired last night when I was thinking of a prayer to share with you this afternoon by the fact that spring has sprung and you can smell the wattle and you can hear the different birds in the blossoms and we've had some very warm days this week. And then of course the rain's come down today. But in any case, I'm inspired today in the prayer that I share with our community, by the changing of season, by the changing of time, just as we have been today in the changing, and the handing over of leadership. We had some beautiful blessings upon the girls and upon the class of 2021, and upon the class of 2020 as well.

And so this afternoon I extend to you and I share with you a blessing. It's a blessing for springtime, a beautiful Irish blessing. And so I invite everybody joining us via this video today to enter into the presence of our loving God, who his Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Deep peace of the forest-layered greening to you. Deep peace of the birds returning to you, then nesting their surround-sound song. Deep peace of the fawn's birth to you. Deep peace of the seeds sprouting to you, the Wisteria bud swell, the lilac scenting. Deep peace of the day's lengthening to you; its warming, its brightening. Deep peace of the morning fog to you; its dew and mist. Deep peace of the frog's pond to you, deep peace of the bees foraging to you. Deep peace of the soil softening to you. Deep peace of Mary's faith smile to you, deep peace of God within you.

And we ask our loving God to help us to live slowly, to move simply, to look softly, to allow emptiness in, and to let our heart live and love in Creation for us. Amen.

Father and Son of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

I wish you all the very best for this weekend of Father's Day, and warm blessings and good wishes to all of our fathers, grandfathers and all those who hold a really dear and sincere fatherly role in the lives of our young people, and of our community. Thank you.

Ms Marina Ugonotti

Principal