

Principal's Message Transcript – Friday, 30 October 2020

Good afternoon to you, to all members of the Loreto Normanhurst community. It is lovely to be with you in these beautiful grounds in the outdoors after a week of cold and of rain here in Sydney and across NSW.

Something that's really struck me this week is just how privileged we are. In those moments, you know, it could be very easy for us to focus on how annoying it can be sometimes, how you can quickly tire of it and yet so many people without a warm bed or without a meal at night, so many people without the safety of home. We are forever reminded of our need to not only be grateful, but to continue to work for those who live on the margins of our society.

I'll just leave that thought with you as I come from these beautiful grounds, grounds that inspire wonder and awe every day.

Since I was last with you, so much has been happening in the last two weeks. I'm sure you'll read a lot about it in today's newsletter. I want to start by congratulating a few students and a few teams of students actually, for their achievements over the last couple of weeks and to wish them well for what's coming up as well.

Last Friday in the Primary School we had the Principal's Spelling Bee. I just love the thought, the fact that as principal, there is a competition - or more than a competition, it's a challenge - for our girls in Primary to engage with the beauty and the wonder of words in spelling. I've always loved spelling and how words come together by different combinations of letters, regardless of what language it's in. And I was just inspired, having been at the finals of the Principal's Spelling Bee last Friday, by the determination and tenacity of the girls, and the way in which you could actually hear the thinking happening. And they did that knowing that they were in an atmosphere of care and respect and really did put themselves out there as they spelt some really interesting words and some challenging words as well as the rounds went on. So well done to you girls for getting to that round but also just for accepting the challenge of doing something where we were quite 'exposed,' when you've got to think off the top of your head like that.

Congratulations also to our three teams of Future Problem Solving at the National competitions last week. All three teams placed very, very well; we're very proud of you. With a first, a second and a third place in the Nationals of the Future Problem Solving competition. Of course, we'll wait to find out what happens to Internationals next year.

Congratulations also to Year 12 student Gian Ellis-Gannell who was named in the Hornsby Kuring-gai Small Business Awards as their Youth of the Year. So well done, Gian, and I know that it's been a big year for all of our Year 12 girls. And that you were recognized within our local community for the way in which you've added value to small business in this community which is of great testament to you. Congratulations to you.

To Ella McKenzie - Ella is in Year 10 in Kuring-gai House. I'm going to read this one, this is quite extraordinary Ella, well done. She finished with the fastest time in the Australian Indoor Rowing Championships last week with the time of 1 minute and 39 seconds, the fastest time over 500 meters in the under 16 Australian division. I had no idea there were indoor rowing championships, but there are and we congratulate you, Ella, on your wonderful achievements. How inspiring is that?

Our Year 12 girls of course continue day by day, bringing their best to their HSC exams. It's been beautiful bumping into girls and having conversations in which I ask them how they're feeling before an exam and they say, 'excited.' Isn't that the way it should be? They're well-prepared. They're ready

for this and there is a calm confidence in you girls that I know is testament to the wonderful work of your teachers and your families. So we continue to hold you in prayer.

Best wishes for next week to Eloise Carey. Eloise is in Year 11 Kendall House, and she'll be participating in the New South Wales virtual Constitutional Convention. The topic that they will be debating and grappling with is - and how relevant is this, in light of the year that we have been living and in the context of our times - the division of powers between Commonwealth and state governments. I'm sure, Eloise, that you've got a lot of material to draw on as you consider the practical implementation of that important corner of the way in which our government and our nation works; that division of powers between Commonwealth and state governments. I have every confidence that not only will you bring your thoughts and your rational way of thinking and clarity with expressing those thoughts to that convention, but that you will also add much value to this really important public debate in understanding how our democracy works, understanding systems of government, and understanding the importance of being active in the citizenship space.

It's dawned on me quite recently that we're heading into November! Roberto here, who is taking the video - he's shaking his head! It's very true, Roberto! We're heading into November and the end of November will be the beginning of Advent, this beautiful season that we prepare for. It is the season of preparation and anticipation, isn't it. It's also that season where we come to really be grateful for and count all of our blessings as we remain forever with an eye of the reality and lived experiences of others. So there's two initiatives that I'd like to share with you today as we head into the beginning of preparing for Advent to come. The first is the Vinnies Christmas Appeal and the hampers appeal that we are collaborating on with St Vincent de Paul Society. Your daughters will have far more information about this and about the various families and areas of the community that we're aiming to serve as we put together some hampers for the families. There are so many of our brothers and sisters who are in need this year. I know from the work that we do with not only Vinnies and House of Welcome, who I mentioned last time we were together, but many other local organisations, that the demands on our not-for-profit sectors and charities and those who are really working very closely with members of the community that those demands are at a really heightened level this year.

So I encourage every member of our community - parents, staff, students, ex-students or friends of Loreto Normanhurst - to consider what you can do to be part of this appeal that we're very committed to here in Term 4 every year as we head towards the season of Advent and as we prepare for the season of Christmas.

And the second one is an initiative that we're running here at Loreto Normanhurst and it's a project that's come out of our Community Engagement team. It's this beautiful Advent Calendar. It has a beautiful Loreto icon painted with great love by Sr Jan Barlow - it is that icon from which we've drawn inspiration this year. It will house some thoughts and reflections that you can unveil as the days of Advent begin and then progress throughout that season. We hope and wish that this is something that can take place in your home and the homes of families and friends in a year when it's being hard to remain connected in the physical and in the personal sense all the time. We're hoping that this strengthens the connection within our community and that it's a way in which we can reach out to those many many members of this beautiful and loving community. So I encourage you to read a little bit more about it in this week's newsletter and to find out more. They are for sale - there are a few that we have set aside for our Golden Jubilarian ex-students so that's a special gift that is coming your way. But otherwise for all other members of the community they are for sale, with all proceeds of the sales of the Advent Calendar going towards our Bursary Fund so that we can

continue in that ongoing commitment to an ensuring that a Loreto education is accessible and available to all young people and their families.

Standing in these grounds is a source of inspiration or wonder as I said at the very beginning. Today concludes the two week experience of 'Songlines' for our Year 9 students; a reimagined program based on the objectives of the Far North Queensland Experience which we weren't able to run this year. Songlines has traced for the girls, from my conversations with them, has traced an opportunity for them to stop and really come to understand the story, the traditions and the richness of the cultures that exist here in our own backyard. And we've partnered with many local elders, members of Aboriginal community groups, as well as having activities and engagement exercises and learning exercises here at the school that allow us to remain forever committed to that partnership and that theme of Walking Beside, Caring for Country.

Another great pillar of this program is that of reflection. And it is that of coming to understand our place within the wonder and the beauty of creation. When we stop and listen to that, when we stop and listen to the tradition of the longest living culture in the world, when we stop and listen to the birds, to the leaves, we stop and we look up at the stars - we also come to find God in all things too. And so this week has been a wonderful opportunity for our girls to grow as individuals and to grow with one another as community. I'm so proud of the way in which they have accepted that invitation, and welcomed the story of others, and allowed for those stories to thread through the stories of their own lives.

And so it's in that ongoing commitment to seeking truth and doing justice, to doing what's right and not what's easy, as the girls have been challenged to do this week that I call on this beautiful prayer.

It's a prayer that's been created as our Songlines prayer for 2020, and I invite you to enter into a time of sacredness, a time where we are at one with our God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Dear Lord, we thank you for the survival of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. We acknowledge the pain and shame of our nation's history, and the sufferings of our First Nations peoples. We ask for your forgiveness.

Give us the courage to accept the realities of our history so that we may build a better future for our nation.

Give us the courage to strive for reconciliation as we come to know the songlines of our local Aboriginal peoples more deeply.

Teach us to respect all cultures. Teach us to care for our land and waters. Help us to justly share the resources of this land. Help us to bring about spiritual and social change, to improve the quality of life for all groups in our communities, especially the marginalised.

Help young people to find true dignity and self esteem by your spirit in order to bring about this change.

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I wish you well for the weekend and the coming week ahead and I look forward to being with you again soon. Thank you.

Ms Marina Ugonotti

Principal