

## Principal's Message Transcript – Friday, 27 November 2020

Good afternoon to all members of the Loreto Normanhurst community. It is lovely to be with you once more for this, our final newsletter for the year. Can you believe it? I actually can't!

This is not my Christmas message to you - I just couldn't bear to do that on the 27th of November. But knowing just how many countdowns are going on, particularly by the girls, it is quite significant that we've reached the final community message for this year. Today we're standing in this beautiful sacred space of our chapel, where this morning commenced with the final Friday morning Communion Service of the year and just concluded the Year 6 Final Liturgy. And they've head off to their assembly now.

That liturgy marked a point in time for the lives of these young women as they've ended their Primary School years of learning and education. It was the beginning of the chapter of their Loreto Normanhurst education, of course, and it was a powerful image to see them leave these open doors of this chapel with messages of love and mercy and compassion and hope, and no doubt the endless beginnings that await them as they move into the next phase of their life here in high school. Just as life gives us new beginnings always, there will be much hope and promise in them too. So it's lovely to be here with you today in our chapel.

That idea of service and generous giving, of who we are, is something we celebrated as a staff last week. I'd like to make a mention of that with you this week, to say thank you to every single member of the Loreto Normanhurst staff community for their generous and loving service this year. I wish particularly to recognise those who we acknowledged in a Recognition of Service evening last week. We have this annually and it got bumped a couple of times because of various restrictions, as you can imagine, in terms of how we could celebrate. It was lovely to gather with 33 staff members last week whom we recognised for their endless and generous commitment to our purpose and our mission here at Loreto. The accumulative years of service for those 33 staff was 275 years of service to the education of girls and young women - quite remarkable! They too bring their stories and gifts to the lives of one another, the lives of families and of course, to the lives of our students. I'd like, on behalf of the whole school, to thank our staff, not only for the work of this year but in particular to those who were recognised for their 5, 10, 15, 20, or even 25 years of service as was the case with Mrs Minto and Mrs Anderson. It really does take a village and we were able to celebrate that last week.

Over the last couple of weeks, there's been a lot going on for our girls and I hope you've been able to keep in touch with that and to hear the stories from your daughters. Year 8 has been busy keeping and 'Building connections.' I bumped into a few groups this week who are doing that three-day program and they were finding clues in the letterbox at the footbridge and goodness knows wherever else as they did a bit of a 'Normo Challenge' based here, as well as other activities. I know it was a great opportunity for the girls to stretch themselves and to open their minds and their hearts to what might be in that space of that program.

Year 10 girls concluded their SPRINT week. I was privileged to be on the panel for the top 10 pitches. And really it was quite remarkable to think of what they'd achieved through their methodology of 'Sprint' in the week, in proposing solutions to problems that business, community organisations and even our School are facing. The girls did pitch some really innovative and entrepreneurial solutions. I'm going to follow up with a few of those groups - they don't know that yet - next year, because I think that some of their pitches really did have legs. I'd love to see some of their ideas and hard work come to fruition insofar as we can make that possible here. So well done Year 10.

I'd also like to make note and to thank our Year 11 girls. They of course have been in the throes of their first HSC internal assessment period and they've undertaken those with a great sense of diligence and commitment. As the year draws to an end, they're very much in the meaty end of that first assessment block. I'd also like to acknowledge and to thank them on behalf of our community for responding to the call - quite literally we received a call from our local St Vincent de Paul chapter - asking for some assistance with families who are in need in our local area. Those girls answered that call so overwhelmingly, in fact not all the girls who put up their hand to help could assist because we couldn't fit everybody in the kitchens. What they did is they undertook to make and bake lasagne. They called it Lasagne with Love. With a surname like Ugonotti, I can tell you a thing or two about lasagne. I recall as a little girl making many with my grandmother and I can attest to the fact that when you put lots of love into it, they just taste that little bit better. And so to those girls who did answer that call and put their love and solidarity into the making of those lasagne so that people in our very own local community can have a warm meal at night - well done. I know it's a commitment that we are going to follow through on in relation to our Vinnies Hampers as well. So just a final plug and reminder to families to please contribute generously to our Vinnies Hampers and we will be ensuring that they get to St Vincent de Paul. It will be part of our Christmas liturgy next week, and they will get to our local chapter shortly thereafter, so thank you.

After this, I'll be popping down to the Drama Space where the last Year 9 class is doing their pantomime. We're live streaming to the children who would ordinarily come on site, and it's been great. I can still hear the giggles when I walk past that space because they're on the other side of the screen so the girls do have an interactive audience. I'm looking forward to that. Well done, Year 9, for sharing the gift and the delight of the Creative Arts and what they can do, in spirit with others in our local community.

There's still more to do and more community to build and to grow and more work to do of course as we head towards the final days of term. And next week we'll have the Secondary School Swimming Carnival done a little differently this year. We had the Primary one last week. I congratulate those girls, and all the House spirit that Benedicta, Dorothea and Clare brought to the Aquatic Centre for that Swimming Carnival for the Primary School. And on Tuesday we'll have our Secondary School Swimming Carnival with competitive swimmers heading out to Homebush. We'll livestream the 'Queen of the Pool' here at school and there'll be some House spirit events in the afternoon.

And given that it's heading into that time when pools and swimming and water and trying to get some relief from this heat that seems to be approaching, I'd like to commend our Student Bursary Committee. On Monday, they'll be actually running a Staff Carwash with the proceeds going to our own Loreto Bursary Fund. So it's a really innovative way that our Student Bursary Committee is contributing to the good work that our whole Loreto community does in ensuring that this education can be made available to families and their daughters who may find themselves in necessitous circumstances. Well done, Year 11, and to the Bursary Committee in particular. I can tell you, you will have one very dirty vehicle from the Principal to scrub and to wash on Monday morning, so there you go!

And then we'll conclude next week with a time in community together, with our Awards Ceremony that will acknowledge the holistic growth of our girls across all dimensions of their faith and spirituality, their academic pursuits, their community involvement and dedication and their extracurricular activities. So, a reminder to parents that there will be a link for the 7 to 11 Awards, and likewise later in the afternoon will be the Year 5 and 6 Awards with the link also sent to you. And we'll have our whole school liturgy - we're really looking forward to that opportunity to gather on

the oval for that to draw the year to a close as we should, in community, in prayer and looking forward to all that lies ahead in this wonderful season of Advent which commences on Sunday.

Advent is a season of anticipation and preparation, a season that draws us so much closer to that beautiful scene of the Nativity, to the baby in the manger. The baby whose gaze and whose eyes always remind us of the endless, eternal beginnings that exist in our life and in our world, to the hope and the promise that comes with the birth of that baby. On Sunday, we will all enter into that beautiful season of promise and hope. It's an opportunity for me to remind you of our Advent Calendars. If you haven't yet gotten yours, there is more information in this week's newsletter about how you can do that.

And I'd also like to extend this invitation to you all - you can read about it in the newsletter - to be part of our celebration of a Christmas Eve Mass. We did record it this week in this beautiful chapel. So it will be a pre-recorded one but it's an opportunity for us to share in community at that occasion, and to bring in this beautiful season of Christmas as we get closer and closer towards it. I wanted to invite you to read more about that.

Just as we draw to a close with symbols of light and hope and promise, you can see the Verity candle behind me. Verity being the value for 2020 and all our Loreto schools across Australia. And this very day, our School Captains from all the Loreto schools across Australia have gathered - they're gathering virtually right now - for their Student Leadership Conference, for a time of formation and networking and understanding one another's communities and how they connect to this broader sisterhood of schools, and really getting to know each other as fellow leaders. I was lucky to join them this morning as Chair of that Loreto Schools of Australia Committee on behalf of all principals of Loreto schools in Australia, to thank the girls for their service and to welcome them to that conference. By the end of today, they will have crafted the prayer for 2021 for us all moving into the year of Felicity. So it is with that hope for all that lies in the hearts of all of our Loreto students across Australia and worldwide, as we draw the year of Verity to a close, that for one last time we will draw on this most beautiful prayer written by the student leaders of 2020 at the conclusion of 2019. I invite you to join me in entering into a place of love and of mercy in the name of our God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

*God of Light, who guides us in ways of truth,*

*Ignite within us the courage to uncover our authentic selves and in doing so discover our greatest gifts.*

*Illuminate the path of integrity, so our lives are defined by love and honesty.*

*Inspire us to look beyond our own horizons to face the truth bigger than ourselves.*

*Called by Mary Ward, we seek and speak the truth: a truth that invites us to do ordinary things well; a truth that leads to justice for all.*

*This is our Verity.*

*In Jesus' name and with the help of the Holy Spirit, we say*

*Amen.*

With that, I wish you, your families well with all the endeavours of the weekend - there's sport, there's grand finals of virtual debating, there's Normo regatta on Saturday and Kirribilli regatta on Sunday. There is so much happening in the lives of all of us. I wish you good health and happiness,

and I'll see you again with that final message for Christmas time. For everything this year, sincerest thanks. Go well, and see you again soon. Thank you.

**Ms Marina Ugonotti**

**Principal**