

Lest We Forget



One hundred years ago last Sunday, after four years (1557 days) of incessant, violent and brutal war, the guns on the combat fronts in Europe fell silent. At the 11th hour, on the 11th day of the 11th month, the hostilities which had caused the senseless deaths of close to 10 million men and maimed twice that number, came to a close. It requires an exercise of the imagination today to understand, let alone appreciate the impact that this conflict had on those who lived through it. Put so eloquently by historian David Thomson: '... it was fought on land and above the land, on sea and under the sea, for the coming of tank and aeroplane, dreadnought and submarine, made warfare three dimensional... Once began, war ran its remorseless course of insatiable demands for human sacrifice, discipline, organisation and ingenuity, until it became an end almost unto itself... It got so utterly out of hand as an instrument of policy that it demanded unlimited sacrifice.' And so, year by year the manhood of Europe and the many countries from which they came across the world, was consumed. A not insignificant number of those who perished were formed here – at Riverview. Boys who all too young became men in uniform, men who faced the crucible of battle, men who died in far off fields for a cause which they believed was noble and right.

A solemn Remembrance Day Assembly was held in the Ramsay Hall on Monday, not only to commemorate this event of national significance, but to honour those Riverview men who responded to the call to arms for a cause that rallied to the call of 'Kind and country'. Sixty-two Old Boys perished in the First World War: in all, 120 Old Ignatians were killed in wars during the 20th Century. Many now lay in graves in foreign lands – across the breadth of the Middle East, North Africa, Europe and Asia. Some have no known grave. At the assembly, each of the Old Boys who died was named and identified by their photo; in itself, a salient reminder to the boys of the distress, hardship and suffering that was endured by the men who fought and died in the trenches of Europe, among the mayhem and madness of the first war of the world. These boys were formed here in a Jesuit school – on the north shore at Riverview.



We are blessed that we do not live amid the harsh and confronting realities of war. However, since the end of the two great conflicts of the 20th Century, while there has been no general war, there has been no general peace. Regional conflicts have raged and still do – in northern India and Pakistan, in many nations in Africa including the Cameroon, Sudan, Liberia, Somalia and Tanzania, in the Middle-East including Iraq, Syria and Yemen, in addition to the endemic violence and military reprisals between Jews and Palestinians in Israel. Australia, the third richest nation from among the 195 countries in the world, remains comfortably closeted from the impact of these conflicts in the southern hemisphere, which is both a source of comfort but also something of an anaesthetic when it comes to truly knowing the destructive nature of the violence, uncertainty and fear of war. The message for the boys was captured in the final words of the assembly: *let us dedicate ourselves to bringing about peace and freedom, both in our community and in our world.*

The week held its own eclectic share of events across the breadth of the school calendar. Teaching and learning continue unabated for the boys at various year levels who remain in their classes, with a noticeable increase in intensity being registered for the young men who have just moved into the HSC in Year 11. The Year 9 Challenge rolls on with the boys halfway through the program. Thankfully the weather has been kind to allow all of the outward bound activities to be undertaken in an environment that capitalised both on safety and the integrity of the outreach program. Mock interviews were held on Tuesday evening for the boys who will be applying for university entrance and residential colleges in the not too distant future. The P&F held their AGM and final function for 2018, capping off a very successful year of activity and growth in membership. As a result of targeted fundraising across the year, the P&F have forwarded a sum of \$120,000 to the College in support of the Bursary Program – this is truly outstanding. Special thanks are extended to Virginia Thompson and the Executive, for the extraordinary work that they undertake to support the mission of the College and build the fabric of community, one that we are truly grateful for.

In context of the theme of this week, and as we progressively move towards the season of Yuletide over

the coming weeks, let us be reminded of the words of St Francis and his prayerful invocation for peace:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:

where there is hatred, let me sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

where there is sadness, joy.

Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console,

to be understood as to understand,

to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned.

Please keep Alex Noble and the Noble family in your prayers.