

Posterity

Out of the sightline and behind the gated premises of the Therry precinct, a moment of posterity was enacted on Wednesday. Father Ross Jones presided at a ceremony that turned the first soil of the construction phase of the Ignis Project. Over the past two months the demolition works have proceeded unabated, despite the fury of the Australian summer and dislocations of heavy equipment and debris. That phase is now complete. Steel dowel rods are being inserted into the carcass of the building in preparation for the new floors and walls which will suspend from it and foundations that hold the extended infrastructure together have been formed into trench lines on the site. Part of the ceremony involved the sealing of a time capsule, which among other items, contained a copy of the service and the key participants, images of the House crests, some items of school uniform, a copy of the School Prospectus, the 2017 School Calendar, as well as letters from students about their hopes for the future of Riverview. Representative members of the College community were in attendance, including the Chair of Council, Mr John Wilcox, respective Presidents of the Parents and Friends (P&F), the Old Ignatian Union (OIU) and the Past Parents Association (PPA), members of the student body, as well as those whose generosity to the College has already led to substantial funding for the project. This was a glimpse of posterity – a chance to appreciate and record the significance of the moment that will be re-visited many times over the generations ahead as the Therry Learning Centre becomes the frontispiece of the College's biggest consolidated building program in history.

Indicative of the fact that the year is well underway is the House Masses and Dinners, which began last Thursday in the Dalton Chapel with Fernando and continued into Week 3 with Xavier and Owen House. These occasions enable all families in the House to celebrate the sacrament of the Eucharist and share supper, as well as afford the opportunity to provide the boys in Year 12 a symbolic farewell as they approach their final year of schooling. And for the parents, some of whom, after many years, will see their youngest son graduate later this year, they are moments of prayerful reflection as they provide time to ponder the richness of the educational program and their association with the wider Riverview community. This has become a tradition at the College that will see families, new and old, gather whether they form part of the incoming cohort or those who are leaving at the end of 2017.

That the year is up and running is evident with the resumption of the ReView Program last week. For those new to the College, this is a supervised study and meal option at the end of the day which assists those families who have transport difficulties across the busy rush hours of the city. In the Satisfaction Survey conducted last year, this particular program was strongly endorsed for the way it assisted the boys to develop structure, obtain assistance from teachers and tutors in particular subjects and ultimately improve both attitude and outcomes in learning. So successful was the program under the direction of Mr Peter McLean on the Senior Campus in its first year, that demand has filtered across to the Regis campus, where the first ReView program began under the watchful eye of Ms Erica Reading last week. Inquiries about joining the ReView Program can be directed to Mr Russell Newman (rnewman@riverview.nsw.edu.au) at the Senior Campus and Mr Matt Smith (mjxsmith@riverview.nsw.edu.au) at Regis.

The boys who joined the immersions to Cambodia, along with their parents, gathered during the week for a Reflection Evening to share the richness of the experience and to process the formation that has accrued from the faith in service program across the summer. Spending weeks in villages, working in schools and orphanages by providing support and assistance to some of the most marginalised communities in South East Asia, is a remarkably instructive and humbling time. The 'classroom of the world' is a place where attitude and character is formed, and these young men return to Australia and the school with a different perspective of their life circumstance, one that has seen the daily difficulties faced by those whose lives have not been so favoured. When looking at religious iconography that has emerged in Cambodia over the latter part of the 20th Century, the Christ figure is missing the right leg from the knee down: symbolic of the number of children who have been victims of land mines over recent generations.

The Khmer Rouge buried millions of them over the course of a decade, and today children continue to be maimed through the camouflaged land mines that indiscriminately tear and wrench human flesh and bone when triggered. And, just as the scars are a salient and ongoing reminder about the suffering of those who are affected, so too is the psycho-social trauma that is the corollary of such distressing and agonising events.

I wish to publicly acknowledge and thank the boys for the exceptional manner in which they handled Sydney's punishing heat last week. With the stifling combination of heat and humidity, the boys could have been excused for being off-task and a little lethargic, particularly in the latter stages of the day. When undertaking a number of Learning Walks around the classroom late last week, the boys were very much focussed and engaged in their learning, which is particularly encouraging to report. It adds to my observations last week in the Viewpoint that the boys have hit the ground running and are embracing the opportunities before them as they pick up the cadence of a busy and demanding academic year.

Best wishes for the week ahead.