

Rounding Off a Busy Term

The normal flurry of activity to round off a busy term of teaching and learning was exacerbated by some major events in the final week. A whole school liturgy was held in the Ramsay Hall on Monday in preparation for the Easter festival. Powerful theatrics brought the compelling story of the Passion, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection to life as students re-enacted those events that began at the Last Supper on Holy Thursday and concluded with the opening of Christ's tomb on Easter Sunday. It was heartening to see the boys so engaged in the narrative that has come to define the hope that lies within the positive anthropology of Christian theology and teaching. And, it was a fitting way to frontload the final week of term that will see families move into their own parishes to commemorate, and ultimately celebrate, the season of new life that is synonymous with Easter. It is my hope that there is much by way of the perennial joy associated with the completion of Lent on Easter Sunday, especially for the younger confraternity who indulge in the season of chocolate!

Student Leaders on the Regis Campus were presented to the school community on Wednesday in the aftermath of the nomination and election process. Congratulations are extended to the boys who have been elected as Class Captains for 2017 and to those who undertake leadership roles in Liturgy, Environment, Technology and Creative Arts. Special congratulations are extended to Sebastian Wong, who has been elected as Captain of the Regis campus. These young men are entrusted with a significant responsibility; namely, to give witness to the values of the College and to lead with integrity and strength. It is not a mantle to take lightly and there is every confidence these boys will build on the fine tradition of leadership at Regis that has been a feature of the campus over generations.

In the aftermath of the Mid-Year Examinations, Year 12 students moved to their respective retreat programs on the final days of term. Located at different venues around the city, it was a chance for the boys, as they begin their departure path from the College over the coming two terms, to consider the big questions: faith, family, friendships and futures. Recent years have seen the genesis of retreats that accommodate a range of spiritual interests ranging from Kairos – that deep religious experience that has become so popular at the Year 12 level, to service retreats such as the Street Retreat and the Cana Retreat. One retreat took the form of a pilgrimage (pictured left), walking up to 20 kms per day; as St Ignatius did when he trod the path of the Basque country in his native Spain the better part of five centuries ago. While each retreat has its own character that draws upon the virtue of reflection and discernment, it uses different prisms of Ignatian spirituality as the method towards the end. After a busy term of HSC studies followed by the rigours of examinations, this was a very fitting way for our seniors to move into the break.

The end of term brings with it the culmination of the Agriculture Program with the Royal Easter Show and the judging of livestock and produce that has been carefully cultivated across the summer. To see our young men in the ring, leading the steers with such authority and confidence, is something to behold. In the produce sheds, the younger boys who have been working with the chickens took justifiable pride in their exhibition of hens and eggs, both of which are in due proportion to the feeding regime which has been established over recent months. Congratulations are extended to Conor Minogue and the team, who took Second Prize in the most competitive division – the Schools' Heavyweight Division. Other divisions and entries are still awaiting results. Like all aspects of the educational program, the boys have worked assiduously to produce and present their best on the day, and for that they are to be commended.

Elevate Education delivered the Study Skills course for the boys in Year 9 on Tuesday as part of the program to develop more structured and effective study regimes early in secondary school. Three years ago the program was introduced into the senior secondary school with very high endorsement from the students. Over recent years, there has been a request for an extension of the program which runs more expansively throughout the College, particularly to build on the disposition and capacity for study in the early years of high school. As expected, the affirmation of the program was exceptional, with a 98%

approval rating; confirmation of the fact that this will continue to be provided into the future to support the boys in their learning and study techniques.

Behind the scenes, the enrolment cycle for 2019 is well underway. Over the course of the last fortnight, dozens of families have been interviewed, predominantly for entry into Year 5 and Year 7, respectively. As usual, demand for entry is very high and there are many more applications than there are places available. Sitting on the other side of the table, it is very heartening to hear the regard with which the school is held in the wider community. There is a clear desire for many families not only to pursue a Catholic education, but one that forms young men in the Jesuit tradition. It is about shaping men of competence, conscience, compassion and commitment – men who have a critically constructive view of the world and who are keen to make a contribution to it. Anything but benign, Jesuit education shuns mediocrity and asks those who will walk through the gate to embrace a holistic program to serve their school and their community, with particular regard for the marginalised. These are lofty ideals, but they find traction in the young men who emerge from this remarkable school, and they are the object of frequent and sustained comment from those who seek entry for their sons over the years ahead.

For those travelling over the Easter period, please be mindful of the density of traffic on the roads, the impatience of other drivers and the need for safety. It is arguably the busiest time of the year as many in the city move to holiday destinations, particularly as Easter this year coincides with school holidays. May the break provide the necessary space to revitalise the spirits after a busy term, and I look forward to the resumption of classes in the aftermath of Anzac Day to begin Term 2.

And in rounding off a busy period of teaching and learning, let us give thanks for all that has transpired over a busy but rewarding term.