



John M Freeman
Principal



From the Principal

Yesterday was Harmony Day, which celebrates our country's cultural diversity with the key message that everyone belongs. It coincides with the United Nations' International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination which has the aim to remind people of racial discrimination's negative consequences. It also encourages people to remember their obligation and determination to combat racial discrimination.



However, sadly we know after the horrific events in New Zealand last Friday that not everyone believes in the aims of these celebrations. The unnecessary loss of life last week was the result of both intolerance and misguided tolerance. The alleged perpetrator of this atrocity clearly demonstrated an intolerance for anyone that did not fit into the warped worldview that he had formed that ultimately manifested into him believing that undertaking this inhuman act was justified. It was not!

I also believe that in part this tragedy is also the result of misguided tolerance based on the belief of freedom of speech entitles people to say what they want and therefore we do not challenge what is sometimes offensive and hateful views expressed by others.

A friend earlier this week brought to my attention Rev Dr Ockert Meyer's Sermon from the Parliamentary Opening Service. Early in his sermon he makes the keen observation that "greatest threat to my freedom is the freedom of others". He then explains that if by exercising my freedom to say or do what I want can limit the freedom of others. I will not try to summarise his thoughts further here, but invite you to read his sermon which is attached to this Newsletter.

There is much more I could write on this, but I feel the best advice about how we ought to conduct our thoughts, words and actions to bring harmony comes from Jesus Christ in the scripture that informed Rev Dr Mayer's thoughts (and humbly my own): -

Mark 12:28-33 (New Revised Standard Version ^(NRSV))

The First Commandment

28 One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" 29 Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; 30 you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." 32 Then the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that 'he is one, and besides him there is no other'; 33 and 'to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,' and 'to love one's neighbor as oneself,'—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

Student News

Congratulations to the Year 7 Girls' Touch football team who won the Junior State Title. Well done to: Ava Melbourne, Joci Heenan, Bella Ellen, Abigail Jephcott, Emmerson Karleusa, Emily Scholtes, Taylah Pavey, Analiesse Eastlake, Valentina Beschle, Leila Gaunt and their coach Nikki Schroeter.

Well done to our Senior Captains on the great assembly they organised last week with the key focus on the impact of bullying and to encourage all at the Kildare Campus to consider all that is entailed in the

National Day Against Bullying and Violence on Friday 15 March.

Congratulations also to all the student leaders who received their badges last week.

Staff News

Yesterday we farewelled Maree Garratt who has held various important administrative roles since 2012, including Principal's Personal Assistant. We wish Maree and her family the best of success in the future.

Also this week we welcomed back Dominic De Van der Schueren after an extended period of sick leave.

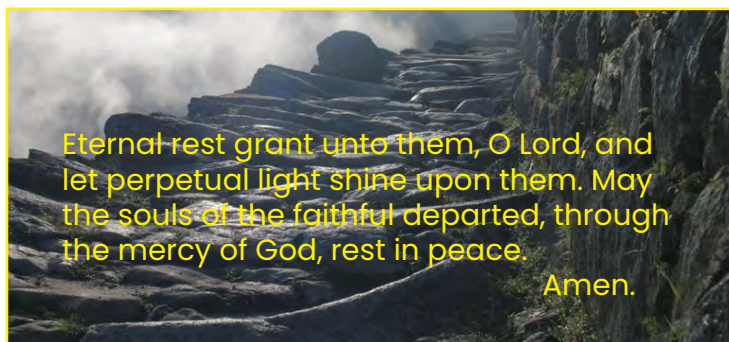
Condolences

Finally, can I please ask that you remember in your prayers the family of:

Keith Enders, father of Kirsten Van Berkel, father-in-law to Brett Van Berkel (member of staff), Lily (class of 2018), Matilda (Yr 11), Molly and India.

Martha Dang, mother of Nyagal (Year 8) and Nyamal (Year 7)

Bruce Styles, grandfather of Rahni (Year 11) and Montanna (Year 8) Styles



STUDENT LEADERS

Campus Leader

Remi Baillie
Thomas Gafa
James Townsend
Lani Zimora

Community Cohesion

Myles Pollard
Chloe Twite
Mische Richards
Giovanna Camilleri

Champagnat House

Captain 1: Giovanna Camilleri
Captain 2: Julian Colantuano
Am1 Yr 9: Charlotte Kanavan
Am2 Yr 9: Alyssa Furlan
Am 3: Yr 9 Seisha Boyd-Thomas
Am 4: Yr 8 Kaidin Atkins
Am 5: Yr 8 Jaclyn Little
Am 6: Yr 8 Madison Beveridge
Am 7: Yr 7 Daniel McDonagh

Nagle House

Captain 1: Khianna Bullen
Captain 2: Billy Whitmore
Am1: Yr 9: Kody Tibballs
Am 2: Yr 9: Callum Bailey
Am 4 Yr 9: Ruby McClements
Am 5: Yr 8: Adele Calagaz
Am 6: Yr 8: Emma Darling

Mackillop House

Captain 1: Georgia Grieve
Captain 2: Melody Paulet
Am1: Yr 9 Thomas Said
Am 2: Yr 9 Will Alkemade
Am 3 Yr 9: Blake Couling
Am 4 Yr 8: Dylan Storey
Am 5: Yr 8 Georgia Said
Am 6: Yr 8 Darcie Gridley

Delany House

Captain 1: Mische Richards
Captain 2: Sophie Melbourne
Am1: Yr 9: Luke Healy
Am 2: Yr 9: Isabella Kalan
Am 3 Yr 9: Amy Hutchinson
Am 4 Yr 9: Sam Clark
Am 5: Yr 8: Miles Verschuur

Special Events

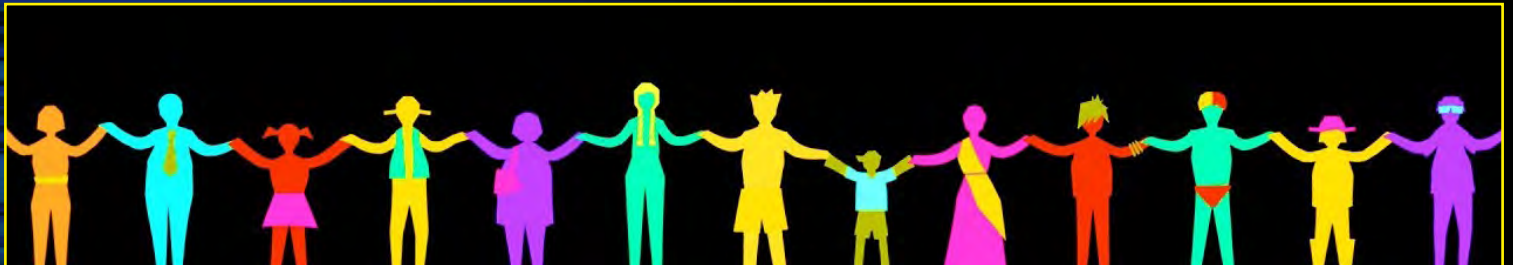
Yr 9: Belinda Delaney
Yr 9: Diane Faurie
Yr 8: Miranda Drougas
Yr 8: Ella Pavey
Yr 8: Chelsea McNamara
Yr 8: Katy Yang
Yr 8: Monica Martines-Dasilva
Yr 7: Anastasia Day
Yr 7: Abigail Jephcott
Yr 7: Paul Antonopoulos
Yr 7: Gemma Herbert

Ministry Leaders

Yr 9: Tayah Warne
Yr 9: Arka Chowdhury
Yr 8: Dechlan Morrison
Yr 8: Myiah Misiurka
Yr 8: Hollie Gibson

SRC

7.1 Sienna Affleck
7.2 Elly Fleming
7.3 Elodie Thorley & Owen Pettigrew
7.4 Sophie Christensen
7.5 Noah Day
7.6 Mia Tosin
7.7 Ryan Johnson
7.8 Jocelyn Heenan
8.1 Charlotte Ryan
8.2 Georgia Reid
8.3 Kyan Mann, Josh Verhagan & Chris Mann
8.4 Myiah Misiurka
8.5 John Marcou
8.6 Emma Darling & Nathan Thomson
8.7 Darcie Gridley
8.8 Hollie Gibson
9.1 Rieley Henderson & Abbey Rhimes
9.2 Gracie Beckett
9.3 Cooper Taylor
9.4 Belinda Delaney
9.5 Liesel Kuhne
9.6 Myles Pollard
9.7 Benjamin Williams
9.8 Diane Faurie



Student Leadership 2018

Events Leaders



Sophia Richmond



Natasha Richards



Anneke Ernst

Cross Age Tutors



Mubasshir Murshed



Malia Monir



Mobarrat Monir



Student Leadership 2019



Environmental Leader



Annie Little

Liturgy Leader



Maddison Knowles

Justice Leader



Madalynne Lyons

Campus Mentor Leader



Brilee Harrison

Mental Health Peer Leader



Antoinette Sanchez

Student Leadership 2018



Champagnat House Captain



Audrey Lee



Benjamin Grumley



Kaijah Noda



Alysha Somerville

Mackillop House Captain



Todd Elliot



Larni Jackson



Chelsea Livingstone



Madeline Whiting

Nagle House Captain

Student Leadership 2019

College Captains



Lori Scholtes



Lily Bond

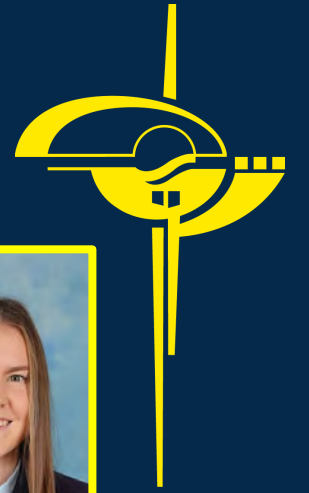


Julien Alesi

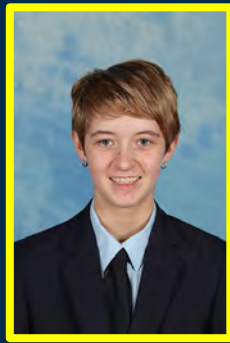


Lincoln Ingravalle

Campus Mentors 2019



Tiannah Goodwin



Chloe Peverill



Riley Pearce



Colby Morley



Mubasshir Murshed



Hollie Gooding



Molly Grieve



Ruby McCormick



Xavier Taylor



Kien Laurins



Alysha Somerville



Nathan Williams



Patrick Walsh



Andre Antonopoulos



Annie Little



Benjamin Lissa



Lachlan Bond



Rico Faurie



Josh Quigley



Lilianna Armatas



Troy Brennan



Keisha Roy



Emily Liang



Daniel Falano



Chelsea Pitzner



Shaynia Logue

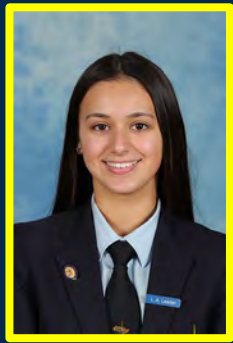


Paige McLennan



Ella Cheney

Cross Age Tutors 2019



Liliana Armatas



Will Ryan



Jacob Pianta



Akisha Wills



Andre Antonopoulos



Monee Poole



Emily Liang



Alana Walker



Mackenzie Renshaw



Megan Stanway



Nathanael Duffy



Hollie Gooding



Rico Faurie



Eliza Whitty



Colby Morely



Sophie Richmond



Kate Robinson



Lingdejun Chen



Nicole Formaran



Jacob Wall



Madison Rohde



Lincoln Ingravalle



Mubasshir Murshed



Maliat Monir



Mobarrat Monir



Lori Scholtes



Cohen Ruyters



Benjamin Grumley

News Around Lavalla

There is a lot happening at Lavalla Catholic College at the moment. But most of these drives are still in progress.

Lori Scholtes (College Captain) reports that the Money Line Fundraiser raised \$771.00. The homeroom with the highest contribution was N5 who raised \$157.00. congratulations to N5 for their generosity. This money will go towards relief for people affected by the recent bushfires.

A few students of the YME class took part in a Fun Run. Details to follow in the next issue. Some of Mr Rathbones Ministry Class completed a fun run on Sunday also to raise more money .

Project Compassion

As part of Lent the college is firmly focussed on Project Compassion. Caritas Australia runs Project Compassion, and asks us to fundraise to support projects for needy people around the world. Caritas provides funding from the money we donate, and equipment and skills. But the most important step is to get the local community to help itself. Following Catholic Social Teaching, Caritas upholds the dignity of the human being.

In Week 4 of Lent, we focus on the story of twenty-one year-old Michaela who is helping people with chronic illnesses at The Purple House in Alice Springs. Featured in Project Compassion 2014, the First Australian-run Wellbeing Program, uses its profits to connect and care for dialysis patients who are far from home.



Michaela has completed a Certificate IV in business management. She was also recently promoted from administration trainee to permanent employee, working on The Wellbeing Program.

The young Alywarr woman cares for patients as they receive dialysis and helps them to feel at home and remain hopeful during treatment. Patients in turn pass on traditional knowledge to Michaela.

The program is run by the Western Desert Nganampa Walytja Palyantjaku Tjutaku Aboriginal Corporation, with support from Caritas Australia.

Project Compassion makes a difference to the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in our country. The least we can do is to show we care by donating to Project Compassion.

GIS ECUMENICAL SERVICE

On Friday the 15th of March five of our College leaders gathered alongside representatives from Mary Mackillop Catholic Regional College, Marist Sion College and Chairo Christian School to plan and lead the Gippsland Independent Schools Ecumenical Service.

With Mercy the theme for this combined schools event, the service saw student leaders collaborating in groups to develop thoughtful responses to the theme that were underpinned by their faith. The day culminated in a liturgical service created by the students that incorporated key components of the GIS Arts Festival: music, drama, prayer and reflection.

We thank Madalynne Lyons, Lani Zimora, Remi Baillie, Thomas Gafa and James Townsend for their leadership on the day and help in making this event a genuine success.



CURRICULUM NEWS

You would have received your child's first set of feedback for 2019. This is the new Learning Behaviours that we are using as part of our revised Feedback model. An email was sent to all parents outlining the changes and explaining the supporting rubric. If you have any questions relating to that please contact your child's Homeroom teacher (Years 7-9) or Learner Advisor (Years 10-12)

Parent-Teacher-Student (PTS) interviews

PTS interview will be conducted in the Champagnat Centre on;

- Thursday 4 April – 4pm-7pm
- Friday 5 April 9am-12pm

The Parent Portal will be open on Monday 1 April to make bookings for interviews.

Study Plan

All students have completed a study plan based around the recommended homework/study/revision times for each year level.

- 14 x 30 minute sessions/week- Year 10
- 16 x 40 minute sessions/week- Year 11
- 21 x 45 minute sessions/week- Year 12

As part of constructing the Study Plan we have also spoken about the recommendation of no more than 10 hours per week of part-time work. Any more

hours than this during the school year can have a detrimental effect on a student's ability to meet the work requirements.

A copy of the study plan should be up in your home somewhere visible to be referred to assist student to structure/manage their time throughout the week.

Literacy

As part of our push to improve literacy across the school one strategy we have spoken to students about is for them to read for 20 minutes/day. If a student only reads for 1 minute per day they only cover 8000 words across the year. If they read for 20 minutes a day they are exposed to 1.8 million words across the year. As part of this in Personal Learning the first 10 minutes are dedicated to private silent reading. This has been very successful and students have embraced the opportunity. As parents when students state they have 'no homework', firstly refer to the study plan, secondly get them to sit down and read for 20 minutes. This can be any printed content of their choosing.

Careers

Currently Year 10 students are working through their work experience booklets in preparation for work experience from 20-24 May (Champagnat & Delany) and 27-31 May. Students are being assisted in Personal Learning in working through the process in setting up and completing required documentation.

WELLBEING MATTERS

On Thursday the 14th of March, all Kildare student leaders and students in positions of responsibility were presented with their badges and presented to the student body at Kildare Campus Assembly led admirably by the College Captains.

This year we have introduced a new student leadership position, that of Mental Health Peer Leader. This was brought about by students seeing the need for Mental Health to be a positive focus not just dealt with behind closed doors. Our new Mental Health Peer Leader – Antoinette, set the scene during our Assembly for The National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence, that students need to stand up when they see bullying occurring, support each other, not just for the one day a year that is recognised, but every day.



WELLBEING MATTERS

On Friday 15th March the College Celebrated "The National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence", along with 5725 other schools nationwide. For St Paul's campus it was the culmination of a week of activities occurring within Homeroom, including creating posters to raise awareness about bullying and its impact, sharing stories, writing poetry and discovering how to be an up-stander, not a bystander. Whilst for Kildare Campus it was a chance to talk to others, have friendly competitions within LA and mindfulness drawing which occurred at lunchtime.

Here is some important information from **Bullying No Way**.

You (parents) are an important part of our work to prevent bullying and to respond effectively if it happens. Stopping bullying involves everyone.

If your child talks to you about bullying:

1. **Listen** calmly and get the full story. Your calm response is important to allow your child to tell you all about the situation. After they've told you their story, ask questions to get more details if you need: who, what, where, when. Although you may feel some strong emotions about your child's experience, try to keep calm to avoid more distress to your child.
2. **Reassure** your child they are not to blame. Many children blame themselves and this may make them feel even worse. You could say things like, 'That sounds really hard to deal with. No one should have to put up with that.' or 'I'm so glad you told me. You should be able to feel safe at school; that's not fair at all'.
3. **Ask** your child what they want to do and what they want you to do. A critical part of your response is to avoid jumping in to solve the problem. While it is natural to want to protect your child, helping them to find their own solution is a better option.

It helps them feel they have some power in the situation.

4. **Visit** www.bullyingnoway.gov.au to find some strategies. The website has tips and ideas for different bullying situations. One idea is to practise strategies at home to help your child feel more confident.
5. **Contact** the school. Your child may be reluctant for you to do this, so discuss the idea and reassure them that the school would want to know and is able to help. Make an appointment to meet with your child's teacher and, if you need to, ask to talk with the principal. Contact the school immediately if you have a concern about your child's safety.
6. **Check** in regularly with your child. Keep the conversation going. It can take time to resolve issues, so check in regularly with your child about their experiences and their feelings. Your ongoing support is important.

Students and parents are reminded that if they are at any time in need of support from the school for any bullying or violence, that they should refer to their planner (Page 4) for where they should go for assistance.

If you are looking for support for yourself to deal with a bullying situation, you will find ideas on the Bullying. No Way! website for parents. As well, please feel free to contact the school if you would like to discuss any aspect of our approach to preventing bullying.

Harmony Day - 21st March

The College recognised Harmony Day, through prayer and a whole school activity. All students were asked to trace their hand, cut it out and then as a class create an image representing togetherness using the hands.



GEOGRAPHY CAMP

On Monday the 25th of February, 24 eager Unit 3 Geography students boarded the 7.40am train at Traralgon for our 'Changing land use' field trip to Melbourne. The study involved collecting primary data using a range of qualitative and quantitative techniques at the Cato Square development site as well as a range of Pocket Parks, including Richmond Terrace, Mollison Street, Abbotsford as well as Oxford Street in Fitzroy.

After unpacking at Urban Central Backpackers Hostel, we went across the road to McDonald's for a quick lunch and then caught what was to be the first of many trams to Prahran. After a slight navigational embarrassment, we found our way to Chapel on Chapel Theatre Complex where we were audience to an informative and engaging presentation presented by Rick Kwasek, the Project Manager for the Cato Square urban open space development. It was then a short walk to the site and a chance to plan strategies for collecting data the following day. Later that afternoon we journeyed to Richmond Terrace Pocket Park, where Kevin Ayrey, Landscape Architect from the Yarra City Council, gave his presentation to the group on the grass and under the shade of

beautiful old tree. After gathering initial primary data including photos, observations, conducting counts and notetaking, we headed back via tram to our overnight destination. With little time, we quickly got changed and walked over to the Crown Complex to watch 'Escape Room' and afterwards, had a lovely dinner in the Food Court. Tired but satisfied with our day's work, we debriefed our initial fieldwork, before heading back to our rooms and a well deserved sleep.

The following morning, we used public transport to return to our field sites, with Mr Judd and Mrs Widrich to continue collecting data as well as completing interviews and surveys with both business owners as well as members of the public. After a quick lunch at Southern Cross, we boarded the train and headed back home. With the final report due in 3 weeks time, students are now analysing the data they collected and preparing their final report. Well done to all students on your approach and efforts over the 2 days and a special thankyou to Mr Mark Judd and Mrs Kim Widrich for assisting on the trip.



TRAINING BAND

On Monday the 25th of February, Our 2019 Training Band has had a fantastic start to the year with the enrolment of eighteen enthusiastic year 7 students. So far this year these students have enjoyed two Training Band rehearsals, small group and individual instrumental lessons and fast improvement on their instruments through their practice sessions.

We congratulate these students on a great start to the year and encourage any students who might be interested in playing an instrument and joining the Training Band to speak with Mr Lebbe, Mr Harris or Ms Felten about signing up.



SPORTS NEWS

Swimming

Another Gippsland Swimming Championship was captured by Lavalla Catholic College last week after 29 student athletes performed strongly in the SSV Regional Championships at Sale on Thursday, March 14th.

Lavalla Catholic College again claimed more medals than any other school with a final tally of 38 medals, finishing with 17 gold, 14 silver and 7 bronze.

In the overall points tally, Lavalla were 115 points clear of the runner-up Marist Sion College, Warragul.

There were a number of strong individual performances, led by four gold medals each for Elayna Pistrin and Ashleigh Mihaly. Even more amazing was the fact that both these girls broke a number of Gippsland Regional records in the process.

Ashleigh produced a new record in the 12-15 year 100m freestyle event in a time of 1:05.23, shaving 0.88 seconds from the previous record. Elayna broke four records along the way 12-20 year 100m breaststroke, 17 year 50m butterfly.

Equestrian

Lavalla Catholic College year 9 student, Charlotte Kanavan, competed at the Hillcrest Christian College Interschool Dressage Day at Ayr Hill Equestrian Centre on Saturday, March 16th.

Charlotte and her horse "Prince Bobby" produce a stellar performance throughout the course of the day to claim 3rd place ribbons in two events.

Congratulations on your efforts!



MEDAL TALLY

| School | G | S | B | Total |
|--------------------------|----|----|----|-------|
| Lavalla Catholic College | 17 | 14 | 7 | 38 |
| Wonthaggi SC | 9 | 10 | 9 | 28 |
| Catholic College Sale | 7 | 8 | 11 | 26 |
| Mary MacKillop Leongatha | 8 | 9 | 8 | 25 |
| Leongatha SC | 8 | 3 | 9 | 20 |
| Marist Sion Warragul | 6 | 7 | 5 | 18 |
| Nagle College Bairnsdale | 2 | 7 | 8 | 17 |
| Warragul RC | 6 | 7 | 2 | 15 |
| Trafalgar HS | 3 | 7 | 4 | 14 |
| Drouin SC | 4 | 3 | 3 | 10 |
| Foster SC | 2 | 1 | 6 | 9 |
| Mirboo North SC | 7 | 0 | 2 | 9 |
| Korumburra SC | 4 | 4 | 0 | 8 |
| Kurnai C | 5 | 0 | 1 | 6 |
| Chairo Christian Drouin | 0 | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| Bairnsdale SC | 0 | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| Lakes Entrance SC | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Sale College | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Lowanna C | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Yarram SC | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |



CALENDAR & EXCURSIONS

Monday March 25

- JTW Performing Arts Excursion

Tuesday March 26

- SSV Touch Football Championships

Wednesday March 27

- Yr 10 Food Excursion
- Yr 11 & 12 Outdoor Rec Camp
- Yr 7 Immunisations

Thursday March 28

- Marist Cricket Trials
- JTW Transport Industry Excursion
- Yr 10 Geography Fieldtrip
- Yr 11 & 12 Outdoor Rec Camp

Friday March 29

- Yr 11 & 12 Outdoor Rec Camp

Thursday April 4

- Final Day Term 1
- Parent Teacher Interviews 4pm - 7pm
- Uniform Shop Open 3.30 - 6.00pm

Friday April 5

- Parent Teacher Interviews 9.00am - 12noon



Opening Times
3.30pm - 6.00pm

DATES

21st March

4th April

2nd May



Rev Dr Ockert Meyer's Sermon

Parliamentary Opening Service

Parliamentary service: 12 February 2019

Psalm 119:73-80/Mark 12:28-33

All of us are the beneficiaries of the struggles of people whose names we do not know and whose stories we have not heard. Of all the gifts we have inherited in such a way, there is probably no greater one than freedom.

There's been a lot of talk about freedom in Australia recently: freedom of speech, freedom of religion, to name two immediate examples.

Let me begin with this statement: In a free country the greatest challenge, the greatest threat to my freedom is the freedom of others.

What do I mean by that? I mean the moment I exercise my freedom to do or say whatever I want, I limit the freedom others.

If there is one value that lies at the heart of democracy it probably is freedom. Hence the question is: how do you protect freedom?

Just as important as the content of the OT Law is the *time* it was given. Not during Israel's time of slavery in Egypt, but while they were on the cusp of entering into the Promised Land. In other words, the Law is given to help them navigate their freedom.

Freedom is incredibly fragile. Without some form of moral code the gain and the sacrifices of generations will be lost. It happens much faster than we think.

One of the most poignant moments in William Golding's classic 'Lord of the flies' happens just after the boys' plane crashed into the island, before things started to unravel. Golding describes a moment where they were playing:

"Roger stooped, picked up a stone, aimed and threw it at Henry-threw it to miss. The stone, that token of preposterous time, bounced five yards to Henry's right and fell in the water. Roger gathered a handful of stones and began to throw them. Yet there was a space round Henry, perhaps six yards in diameter, into which he dare not throw. Here, invisible yet strong, was the taboo of the old life. Round the squatting child was the protection of parents and school and policemen and the law. Roger was conditioned by a civilization that knew nothing of him and was in ruins."

Yale Law professor, Stephen Carter first published his book "Integrity" in 1996. It is a so-called 'pre-political' book – a book exploring the elements of good character, irrespective of which side of politics you find yourself. Integrity is the virtue that helps us understand what is right and to do it, irrespective of the cost. As he says, if someone has no integrity, there's no point in asking them what they stand for.

If integrity is the tool whereby we create our moral selves, following that, we must create tools for interacting with others. This attempt to create these tools culminated in his second book two years later. This was titled 'Civility'.

If integrity creates moral individuals, civility creates moral communities. Civility, Stephen Carter suggests, is what is needed to protect freedom: both yours and mine.

Already in 1787 the well known anti-slave trade campaigner and British politician, William Wilberforce noticed the link between freedom and civility when he wrote in his diary: "God Almighty has set before me two great objects, the suppression of the slave trade and the reformation of manners."

In many people's minds civility is just good manners. Manners form a part of civility, but civility in the way I'm using it here, is much more: When you have respect, kindness and decency, you have civility. The opposite of civility is barbarism and it's only when we see this that we realise what path we embark on if we lose all traces of civility.

Civility doesn't mean that we should always agree with one another; it is exactly in the way we disagree that we show our civility or the lack thereof.

When Jesus summarised the law he made it clear that love is the greatest expression of freedom and the law/civility is there to protect it. The love that Jesus speaks about is often confused with like. We think loving one another is the same as liking one another. However, the command to love one another, is about respect and kindness – irrespective of whether you like people.

It is interesting that when the law is given for the second time in Deuteronomy Israel is explicitly reminded of the plight of the stranger and the orphan. In other words, understanding that freedom can lead to the temptation to only look after our own, to only care from myself. Reaching out to the other, especially the alien other, is perhaps the greatest sign of decency and civility.

I have been fortunate to be on the receiving end of this civility and can vouch for the difference it makes. In 2003 my family and I came to Australia to spend a year of adventure here. We rented a house in Deakin, strangers in a very foreign country. The second day we were there the neighbours walked over, introduced themselves, looked at the scant furniture, at the empty driveway and asked: do you need anything else? Do you have a car? If not, you can take one of ours. We don't use both of them.

Nothing, nothing creates affection for and loyalty to a country than this kind of unsolicited generosity, trust and kindness.

Towards the end of last year Stan Grant interviewed Andrew Hastie and Anne Aly on his program "matter of fact". Concluding the interview he asked them in the spirit of the season to say something that they appreciate in each other. Usually getting a response to a question like that is like extracting teeth. What followed was a brilliant example of civility and generosity, of kindness and decency towards one another. Most surprising to me however, was the effect it had on me. I felt proud and elevated.

And I realised that civility spreads. That kindness is contagious.

Verse 77 of the Psalm says: "Let your mercy come to me, that I may live". We pray for God's mercy on all of you and all of us. Mercy to be decent, to be kind and to be respectful, in one word: civil.

That this is the only way that we will truly live; live in and from the freedom of God and the gift of God's freedom. Perhaps the only gift that truly keeps on giving.