



Year 12 Graduation Speech 2019

Good Evening Year 12, Families, Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen

In July this year we celebrated the 50th anniversary of man's first step onto the moon. Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin's feats will be ever etched into the minds of generations, as will be the words... one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.

In 2019 perhaps what is lesser known but equally important are the feats of two women astronauts, Christina Koch and Jessica Meir. This past Friday Koch and Meir conducted the first-ever "all woman spacewalk," during which they replaced a faulty piece of hardware that helps to power the International Space Station.

Jessica Meir speaking to the media said how much of a dream it has been for her to not only become an astronaut, but to complete a spacewalk.

"This is what I've always envisioned myself doing really my whole life."

"I wrote this in my high school yearbook under future plans. I said: to go for a spacewalk. So, I finally checked that box and have lived that dream,"

But even more powerful came from her further reflection:

"Another dream would be to go to the moon. That's always the image I had from the very first drawing I did of when I said I wanted to be an astronaut in the first grade – was standing on the surface of the moon. So, I think maybe I'll make that my new dream."

She added:

"I would absolutely love to be the first woman on the moon. That would be my ideal mission. It is time for us to go back to the moon, and I think that we will be able to do that in the near future and I would love to be the one on that mission."

What a great story, moreover a powerful reflection on living one's dream?

Year 12, as you sit here today can you recall that drawing, that story you created as a child that lit the fire in you of what is possible in your life?

Like Astronaut Jessica Meir, is that dream still with you today in your future plans... or has it led to another dream, another ambition or hope of what might be in the years ahead.

It is important to note that living out our dreams is the sum of many opportunities, challenges, experiences and of course people who support and walk with us - with their own gifts and talents. For it was not one person behind the astronauts - Jessica Meir, Christina Koch, Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin, and Michael Collins.

There were thousands of people who would have contributed in some way to the Apollo 11 moon landing 50 years ago as there would for this recent incredible feat. It took many individuals, all with different talents and abilities to collaborate in contributing to this historic event. Year 12, you need to remember that you all have the ability to achieve your dreams. You will make mistakes and experience failure. You may not be rocket scientists or astrophysicists, but will be no less important, whatever the path it is you choose to travel.

We do not live in a vacuum or in isolation from others. As such, we all have the potential to impact positively on the community in which we will live by making others feel worthwhile and valued, by instilling a sense of awe and wonder, by contributing to the health and wellbeing of the people around us. There are many avenues towards achievement.

We just need to remind ourselves that we can achieve anything to which we set our minds. To overcome any challenge, you just need to dare to dream that you can reach your own moon landing.

Michelle Obama, the wife of former President of the USA Barack Obama, a leader, role model and inspiration by her own life journey says:

“You should never view your challenges as a disadvantage. Instead, it is important for you understand that your experience in facing and overcoming adversity is actually one of your biggest advantages.”

There is no doubt you have faced challenges in your time at school and at home.

- What have those experiences taught you?
- Have they prepared you for what lies ahead?

To answer these questions, I would like you to consider the example of the life of Saint John Henry Newman - the person by which this College is named.

Last week, Pope Francis presided over mass in front of over 60,000 people in a sun-drenched St. Peter's Square where he declared Newman a saint, along with four women saints. Becoming Saint put simply means your life was one full of heroic deeds, it made a difference to many. Thousands of people from schools, universities and churches from countries across Europe and North America were there to honour him.

I too had the privilege to be in attendance at this incredible event representing the only named Newman College in Australia.

For note, Newman lived in the 19th Century; he was a theologian, poet and priest. But what he was revered for was his pursuit of academic excellence as a writer and critical thinker. His prolific writing focused on the search for truth and the freedom of conscience. Newman's writings fostered community and prioritized education. He sought to inspire people to do the same in a time of great division and inequality between social classes, men and women, countries and more specifically between Catholics and Protestants.

Newman's writing promoted inclusion, underpinned by the notion of human dignity:

It is a call on every one us, not as simply the better way, but as a matter of life and death, to cherish a personal affection for each other, and to show all kind, attentive and humble service to each other; and in this great duty the difference between superiors and their subjects, old and the young, men and women, simply vanishes; these differences cannot exist.

Saint John Henry Newman's invitation to us is to live our life to be one of humble service and affection to each other. If this can underpin our intent and be the foundation for lives, our future, no matter what challenges we face, will be assured.

To that end, we celebrate today your time here at this remarkable PK-12 College of over 1900 students.

At Newman College our culture is strengthened and supported by our characteristics of **presence, love of work, simplicity, in the way of Mary and family spirit.**

They drive the cultural elements that shape who we are, what we represent and what we are going to become.

The fundamental beliefs and assumptions in this community are that you all have the potential to succeed. Our **Vision for Learning Shine through discovery** – *let you light shine* asks this of us -- that we can be excellent; we have license to let our light shine.

Year 12, you are a magnificent exemplar to our College of this Vision by your participation and willingness to 'have a go'.

You have exemplified the Marist notion of presence by the way you have valued relationships, through:

- your reflection and spirituality at the Senior Retreat,
- the highs and joys of the College Ball,
- your collaboration with your teachers,
- your respect and support of Mrs Bramanto, your PCG teachers and College Leadership Team
- and when one of you were down someone was always there to lend a hand of support

You have demonstrated a willingness to get involved and have the flexibility to try new things in our co-curricular initiatives; be it in ministry, creative and performing arts and / or sport.

Year 12, you have **stood up** for what you have believed to be right and just. Your leadership group, so well led by Courtney and Matthew, and so many others advocating on many issues. In particular the promotion of fundraising efforts for Marist Solidarity and Caritas Australia and the College's strategic direction on the use of renewable energy and recycling has been outstanding.

Your efforts, demonstrated by application, resilience, discipline, shared values, friendships and self-belief have enhanced our Newman culture.

Thank you for sharing your gifts and talents and for sharing your leadership. Your time in this community, be it 6 or 14 years, is valued and acknowledged.

Let us put our hands together for the Graduating Class of 2019!

We may not all want to go to the moon, but we all have moon like aspirations that sit deep within all of us. You finish today at Newman, but your lives really are just beginning.
This is the start!

Your foundation has been laid; the pillars are in place.

So, going forward...

- what life do you intend to lead?
- what opportunities will you grasp?
- and what difference will you make?

Like those remarkable astronauts -- be resilient; seek to overcome adversity; the challenges, the opportunities

- Do what you love to do
- Seek to make a difference in the world, to transform the world and to be an agent of change.

We wish you all the best in the next stage of your journey. We will pray for you as you seek to make your mark in the world.

In the words of St John Henry Newman:

Let us grow in wisdom and love
and act with courage to choose what is right.
May we always be open to change
and have the strength to accept
what is new and valuable.
Give us peace and happiness in what we do.

We ask this through Jesus, Your Son,
and Mary, our Mother.

Amen.