



Principal's Assembly, Term 1 2020

Wednesday 5 February 2020

Welcome back to 2020! A special welcome to Year 7, and to those who have joined our Newman Community for the first time. We look forward to your presence and participation in the life of our Marist College.

Over the course of the last 3 months our country has been confronted by the devastation and tragedy of the bushfires that roared up and down the east coast of Australia starting in September in QLD, moving through NSW into the ACT, Victoria, parts of South Australia including Kangaroo Island and smaller fires in north and south of Perth here in Western Australia.

On the screen is a picture of a property 5 hours south of Sydney near a town called Bega. This picture was taken at 4:34pm..... the next picture, same property at 4:55pm and the final picture taken at 5:24pm.

For those who have been to NSW in the summer, the sun sets at 8:15pm. Can you imagine for a moment the fear and anxiety of those who were confronted by this scene?

A scene repeated over and over again across the country leading people to have called this summer **Black Summer**.

Today you come back into our College cognisant, aware, not only of this catastrophic event but also on the impact it has had on our country.

- Over 1 Billion animals dead
- 3000 homes lost and
- 33 people lost their lives, either defending their property or seeking to protect others'.

I listened to a radio interview yesterday of family who has lost everything; their worldly possessions melted to the ground. The mother of the family said the following:

"I cannot begin to describe the heartache I feel on having lost everything..... But we have to move on, we have to be hopeful. Last Wednesday my children went back to school. They had to get new school bags, new pens, pencil cases, work books. We are living in the lounge room of a friend's house, we may have nothing, but what we do have is each other, the support of our community and with that we have hope and it is with hope that we can rebuild our lives."

The courage, the carriage and conviction of this mother was incredible! Her family has no material possessions, but they have each other and they have the support of their community and, in everything, they have hope.

As we start the new school year, we should reflect not only on those inspiring words, but also on the impact this catastrophic event has had not just on our nation, the world, but ultimately on ourselves.

This event challenges us to think about our lives, our attitudes, beliefs and perceptions

- about how we live our life,
- how we react to adversity particularly when life gets hard and
- ultimately, how to make the best of the opportunities that are afforded to us.

Being part of our PK-12 1850 student strong community gives us this opportunity.... *Shine through discovery* - let your light shine challenges us to search deep within our own selves about the gifts and the talents that we know we have and perhaps the ones we are yet to discover.

We need to individually and collectively as a school believe that our talents can shine but to do so the characteristics of commitment, perseverance, belief and hard work must underpin our intent.

So, when it gets hard, what will we do?

When we see our friend in need, how will we react?

Will we look in and think only of ourselves or will we look out and seek to be of service?

The bushfires have rallied many in our country to look out. There have been countless stories of people who have gone out of their way to be of service and support to those in need. The significant issues going forward lay not just in the recovery effort, but coming to grips as to why it happened and how we can be proactive in addressing the causes. Being an advocate, for example, participating in the dialogue about the changes to our climate and its impact is one such way.

In another small way, this Friday we will be having a fundraiser to support the Bushfire Appeal which we will talk to in a moment.

In closing today; I want you to consider what it means to be part of this community. As a Catholic School we place Jesus at the centre of school. To this end, we focus on our Marist characteristics of:

- **Family Spirit**, - how we come together as classes, in year groups, as a PK- 12 College
- A **love of hard work** - getting involved, participating in class and getting involved in co-curricular activities such as NAS, the creative and performing arts, or ministry
- **Simplicity** - acknowledging that we all have something to give, in our special way
- **In the way of Mary** - recognising a strength, a reliance of characters, a perseverance to overcome adversity

And, most importantly

- **Presence** - in the relationships we form with each other and our teachers - exemplified by love, compassion and forgiveness

The first opportunity as a collective will be our PK-12 Mass next Thursday. This mass marks our community as a place of love, faith and ultimately hope. Your participation is a valued;

your participation is a sign of your commitment not just to this school, but our Marist project established by St. Marcellin Champagnat over 200 years ago.

As we start the new year, we give thanks for our Marist Brothers - Br. Terry, Br Paul, Br John and Br Noel.

We give thanks for our teachers as they walk with you this year.

We give thanks for our families, our friends, the people we love.

And, finally, we give thanks and pray for those families who have lost everything.... We pray for the grace and love of God to give them hope in the future ahead.

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.