



St. Damian's Newsletter

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**PLEASE NOTE:
SUPERVISION OF STUDENTS IS BETWEEN 8.30am TO 3.30pm ON SCHOOL DAYS.**

FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Dear Parents and Families

Happy Easter to everyone and welcome back to Term 2. I hope that everyone in our community had the opportunity to relax and enjoy some family time during the holiday break before "home schooling" became the norm. We are definitely living in very unprecedented and different times. But, let us remember that this event, the coronavirus pandemic is the stuff of history and is something that we are all very much a part of. In fact we part of history in the making and in years to come future generations will learn how we all played our part. We know that historical events force reflection and affect change. I suspect that as a result, much may change and evolve. We never expected to be thrust onto a technological wave that has impacted so much on our educational system in such a short time. Many of us have had to draw on our personal resources to manage and change, not only our thinking, but our way of working. Students, teachers, parents, carers, all partnering to ensure that learning and teaching opportunities continue to support our students to flourish. Indeed 2020 may go down in history as the catalyst for how quickly people can adapt and change.

It is fitting at this point to thank our teachers for the outstanding work done over the past few days, as we launched into our new way of learning and teaching through flexible and remote learning. It's amazing to think that our students are now engaged in remote and flexible learning, when just three weeks ago they were all onsite in classrooms. It's an extraordinary achievement that was only possible because of all the work that's gone on over the past few weeks.

While things went well overall, I know that we did experience issues. We are working hard to try and resolve these as quickly as possible so that each student has access to all the online learning opportunities.

Yesterday's communication from the Acting Director of Catholic Education Melbourne reinforces why it is important to not become complacent about this global pandemic. It is wise to remember that, whilst in Victoria we continue to manage this situation well, the threat is ever present. Mr Jim Miles stated, "*I am grateful for your efforts in communicating with parents about the directive that all students who can learn from home must learn from home.*"

Yesterday, Victoria's Chief Health Officer, Dr Brett Sutton, reinforced the reasoning behind this directive, which can be shared with your school community:

'My advice to the Victorian Government was and continues to be that to slow the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19), schools should undertake remote learning for term two.'

'This is because having around a million children and their parents in closer contact with teachers and other support staff has the potential to increase cases of coronavirus not just in schools but across the community.'

'By having remote learning, it can contribute to physical distancing and therefore supports efforts to drive transmission down.'

The transition into Term 2 has been demanding, but I can reassure you that your work is keeping our school communities safe and well."

We are certainly doing our very best to support as much as possible and ensure the safety of all members of our school community, students, families and staff. I thank all in our school community for your collaboration, understanding and partnership in this endeavour.

While children are working remotely from home, there is the temptation to use their devices to contact and chat with their friends. We acknowledge that maintaining contact with friends is important for their overall wellbeing, however we need to impress on everyone that Google classroom is **NOT** a chat room and not designed for this purpose. Google classroom and Google hangout is to be used for **learning only**. Can we please ask parents to be mindful of the children and how devices are being used and perhaps negotiate with them alternative ways in which they can maintain friendships during this period of social distancing.

I have attached Father Vincent's Gospel Reflection for you and your families to use during this Easter Season. I know that Easter this year was quite different to perhaps other years, but it is still important to reflect on the importance of this day and its message of hope and love. Easter is the most important feast in our Church year as it brings the promise of eternal life.

Dear Friends

Easter this year has gone quietly without public gatherings to celebrate as faith communities throughout the world. The restriction of social contacts and movements to stop the spread of the coronavirus and to minimize its deadly infection has created in us a new dimension of faith. It has become deeply more spiritual and more family focus. So we shouldn't let the message of Easter come and go without taking any effect in our own life and in our family life. The grace of Easter should be our strength and the 'Good News' of Christ's resurrection should be the source of joy and hope as we look forward to the day soon when everything is back to normal and we are community again.

The Gospel of this 2nd Sunday of Easter tells us that after the tragic death of Jesus, the disciples withdraw themselves in a locked room to stay away from the Jews. They are in fear, worry and despair. Suddenly Jesus appears and greets them, "Peace be with you." He shows them his hands, his feet and his side and then eats with them. Jesus is with them again in a new way. However because of his absence, Thomas misses the opportunity to meet the risen Jesus. He continues to have doubt, fear, worry, and despair. Only when Jesus appears again and shows the scars and the marks of his suffering that Thomas humbly accepts the truth and professes his faith.

These days we constantly live with uncertainty, anxiety, fear, even despair as the world and the nations are still working very hard to fight against the deadly force of the coronavirus. More than ever, we are in need of peace. Peace is a gift from God given through the Risen Jesus. The disciples could not overcome their fear and despair until Jesus comes back into their lives. He comes back to heal the wounds in their hearts. He comes back to strengthen their faith, to give them the gift of the Holy Spirit and the power to forgive sins. He comes back to make them witnesses of his resurrection.

The celebration of Divine Mercy on this Sunday is to remind us that Jesus is the manifestation of God's love and mercy. God's mercy is revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He came into the world because of his love for us. He died by sacrificial death on the cross because he loves us. Once he accomplished this sacrifice; he returned to his disciples to restore peace in their hearts and to commission them to go into the world to preach the good news of forgiveness and to bring peace. May the risen Christ be with us, strengthen us and unite us as Easter people. May His power of Resurrection restore hope and confidence in the world with joy and peace for a better future.

Fr Vincent Le PP

Enrolment for Foundation Year (Prep) 2021& Tours

Even though we are in very different times at present, we know that the pandemic will eventually end and that school life will resume. Enrolments for children beginning their first year of schooling, Prep next year, are still open. We appreciate that families like to visit and tour schools prior to making their decision. However, given the current situation tours will look a little different this year. In the past our very capable school leaders took prospective parents for tours. This year, the tours will be by appointment only and made with me. Unfortunately tours will not be the same as in previous years, due to the fact that the school is minus its students. Having a school tour gives people a sense of who we are as a community and unfortunately this will be missing as our most important members, the students, are absent. However, tours are still possible, but only for families who are seriously considering our school for their child and are keen to enroll here. Tours may be booked through the school office. This will enable us to respect the social distancing rules in place at present.

ANZAC Day Services

We have all been made aware that ANZAC Day services have been cancelled this year due to COVID 19. Unfortunately the dawn service at Watsonia RSL will not go ahead and the 10.00am service has also been cancelled. Families can still mark this day in some special way. Some communities have decided to stand on their driveways at dawn with a candle and share in some quiet and reflective time with their neighbours. I am sure there are many ways in which this day can be marked. The Wreath laying service at Watsonia will go ahead at 10.00am, this could be something some families may consider.

Have a good week everyone and continue to look out for each other, especially those in our community who are most vulnerable.

Rosanna