



Friday 7th August 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Covid-19 Update No.14

Awareness.

Social distancing.

Face masks 12 years and over.

Enter College grounds only if essential.

The safest place is at home.



Tomorrow is the Feast day of *St Mary of the Cross – Mary Mackillop*, Australia's first Saint. Mary was an extraordinary woman who dealt with many adversities. She lived in the 'bush' and gained strength through acceptance of life's challenges and so often through the deep connection with her faith. Mary could mix it with anyone and would have preferred sitting round a drover's campfire than dining with the high end of town. A fine lady was Mary Mackillop and it is worth googling her history to understand the strength of her resilience during troubled times.

I write this Covid-19 Update at a time when we are challenged again as we all continue to live in Stage 3 restrictions, and with the possibility of even tougher times ahead if the spread of Covid-19 cannot be contained. Life is difficult, especially if you have young children at home. There is no alternative at present – a pandemic such as Covid-19 cares little for matters of the heart, frustration, or for the disruption to normality.

I commented back in the final Week of Term One that Covid-19 will move goal posts; bring many questions and contradictions. This view is as relevant now as it was when we first moved to Remote Learning in Term Two. This week I received a phone call from a principal asking for advice because their school does not have consistent structures in place to determine onsite attendance. They are at the point of having to move to complete remote learning. That school like us wrestle with their hearts and heads knowing we'd all like to support more students on site but a pandemic does not give solace to such a priority. We are now at that point in time when we cannot take the same number of students on site, or St Mary's too will end up in complete remote learning mode.

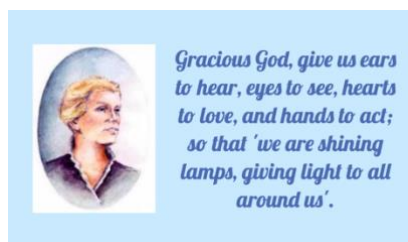
I had a Catholic Education Melbourne Principal's Zoom meeting yesterday. Every school is grappling with doing their best to support families and at the same time factoring in the welfare of the staff. CECV and the Victorian Government are now requiring more staff to work remotely and for good and sensible reasons. In the Northern Region many Catholic schools have either closed and reopened or are currently closed undergoing cleaning. In one school there were large numbers of students and teachers returning positive Covid-19 tests.

In the 'ideal world' at St Mary's we would be accepting more students for onsite supervision but now those moving goal (Covid-19) posts have forced our hand again. Since Term Two began some schools literally closed their doors. At St Mary's we honoured the criteria and went above and beyond in providing for students on site. What was then cannot be now. We are scrutinizing onsite applications (as difficult as this is) more stringently within the criteria, otherwise numbers will increase quickly and therefore the parents who are at most need for onsite supervision will not have that access and onsite numbers will overwhelm the staff, depleting one to one device availability along with other issues that will surface.

More than two thousand years ago people like the great Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle began using the words '*for the common good*' when there were times of state and community crisis. During these strange and difficult times at St Mary's we are doing our best to make the decisions based on the common good.

Please be aware that you must complete a CareMonkey to apply for onsite supervision. Applications close 9:00am Thursday morning. If CareMonkey is closed please email office@smseymour.catholic.edu.au

Many of you reading this update will be feeling the pain, either directly or indirectly of someone affected by Covid-19. A son or daughter out of work; possibly your own employment issues; someone who is ill and or your own personal struggles. It is important to stay connected with others. Isolation can be debilitating. Staying connected during difficult times is a recipe for good health in mind, body and spirit.



Prayers Please

Finally, please say a prayer for the doctors and nurses caring for Milly Brock and Neil Hough (my future son in laws dad). Milly a former student and daughter of long serving (staff member) Jennine and Darren is in a serious condition in hospital. Neil, a wonderful person, is fighting hard to stay in this world. The power of family prayer does more than perhaps any of us realise.

Stay well and best wishes

Wayne Smith

Principal

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