



2 June 2020

Dear Parents/Caregivers, Staff and Students

The COVID19 crisis has been an unprecedented event causing significant disruption to our lives. It is far from over and I pray that potential health and economic implications do not impact you and your families greatly.

From the onset of COVID19, Kolbe Catholic College has made all of its decisions based on the principles of:

- everyone's health and safety is a key priority
- remote and onsite students will receive the highest quality education
- we will maintain clear and current communication.

We hope that your experience has reflected these ideals. We certainly won't claim to have "got everything right" and we have learned a great deal over the past 12 weeks. The following letter is my reflection on these learnings and some of our strengths as a Catholic College.

I joined our College in 2017 and I immediately noticed that there was a strong sense of identity at Kolbe. While calling ourselves the Kolbe family may seem a rather strong term of endearment, I have witnessed the best of this come to the fore recently.

The staff at Kolbe believe in the children they teach and work for their benefit. I have watched teachers working themselves to exhaustion to provide "their kids" the best possible education and pastoral support. Many juggled class preparation and delivery with the demands of supporting their own families and in doing so, the work/home boundaries blurred. Many teachers noticed the clock ticking over to 9.00pm and realised they had forgotten to prepare and eat dinner. Teaching is a vocation that is often, at worst, much maligned or, at least, undervalued. Can there be anything more noble than assisting children to grow into fine young adults? I am heartened to hear many outside the field of education espouse the virtues of the teaching profession, some as a consequence of being challenged by their own home-schooling environment. I am very proud of our teaching staff and the tireless efforts they have made to assist our young people.

Not all of our staff are teachers. The greatest strengths of a workplace are sometimes found in unassuming places. There is a clear sense of purpose that it is "all about the kids" amongst all of the staff. From the Learning Support Officers, who have supported our most vulnerable students, to our maintenance staff, who have been onsite every day to ensure we were prepared to cater for the health and safety of everyone, all have been working under difficult conditions for the benefit of the students attending Kolbe Catholic College.

However, our Kolbe family is not limited to our staff. Previously, I have stated that the partnership of parents and teachers is vital to have the highest impact on learning and the pastoral well-being of the students. I want to thank you, the parents and caregivers, for your humbling level of support during the previous three months. You have experienced the tension of uncertainty brought about by COVID19 and through it worked with us to ensure your children have progressed with their learning. I hope you have found and continue to find, our communication clear and timely. We will look for every opportunity in the future to work with you for the betterment of your children.

To the students, I say thank you. Kolbe Catholic College is not really identified by its buildings and curriculum. It is ultimately made up of 1008 young people who embody the spirit of the school. We are a family that aspires to be more and our young people have risen to the challenge more than ever recently. They have faced the challenges of COVID19 and tried to conquer it with learning. It is wonderful to hear the College come to life again as our students are progressively returning.

We find ourselves returning to some sense of tentative normal. It is rather extraordinary to be writing these words in the week following the Feast of Pentecost. Let's venture forth from our locked rooms cautiously as COVID19 has not gone away. But, let's do so enlightened by what we have learned in recent weeks. Let's say thanks to those working in the supermarkets, let's keep going for a walk, let's listen to the birds sing and let's go forth loving our neighbour as much as ourselves.

I conclude this letter with an excerpt from Fr Frank Brennan's homily last weekend.

"Like those disciples from diverse places and cultures at the first Christian Pentecost, and like the Chosen People at every Pentecost grateful for the fruits of the harvest and of the covenant, let's leave the house filled with the Spirit professing: in essentials, unity; in doubtful matters, liberty; in all things, charity. Let's not stay locked away in the house, afraid, talking only to those who are likeminded. Like the disciples in today's gospel, let's hear Jesus telling us, 'Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so am I sending you.' I wish you a blessed Pentecost."

Yours gratefully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Scully', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mr Nick Scully
Principal