

Good evening everyone and thank you Mark for the opportunity and privilege of thanking all staff gathered here tonight and those who couldn't be present. You are given the privilege, the honour of educating the children families have entrusted in your care. No wonder you are held in such high regard by so many!

You are part of the noble art and noble profession of Teaching and working in education. Congratulations and thank you on behalf of the hundreds of families who have chosen Salesian College for their children's education.

When do we hear about teachers? When a parent isn't happy? When a complaint has been made against them? When the NAPLAN results have been disappointing. About all the holidays you get! You don't hear about the staff member who has managed to reach out to that disengaged student, who has taken the time to establish a relationship where that child can take a risk, make a mistake and be enriched by the process. Where there is trust and value and respect. When the personal greeting you give in a busy classroom, using that student's name and seeing them as a unique person worthy of your time. When you acknowledge effort rather than just product, when you give feedback that sets them on a clear direction of where to next, when you intervene and explicitly teach and guide and support and encourage, indeed when you *make the difference!* Through your teaching and supporting, your profession, your vocation YOU give a student the confidence that they need to take that next step in the journey of learning and they know that you have their best interest as your number one priority. Nor do you often hear about a teacher or LSO when they have worked with a student over many years and have turned the life of that student around, but you know and hopefully one day they will know too that it was worth your while to put in all that time and all that effort because that's what good educators do. There is indeed something very noble in that.

Children are a manifestation of their parents - and like their parents, teachers want what's best for their children. Sometimes teachers and families can disagree though on what that BEST is. When we interact with families who perhaps cannot see the big picture, who may not have our overall perspective, who may be so wound up in doing what they think is best that they can't see that their interaction is not what is best, as educators we understand that learning is a process, and a process for parents too. It's your professionalism, your empathy,

your life experience, your commitment to excellence in understanding how students learn and the professional and courteous way you deliver, that should make the difference. Parents respond from a perspective of love and sometimes protection, with our professional conduct and empathetic interactions, we can indeed educate them as well.

Then there's the whole Social Media circus. I imagine many students live their life around a phone or similar device. The benefits and trappings of social media are well known to you and can be a real distraction to your teaching. But it can also be a great tool for teaching and learning. So of course you use IT in your teaching strategies. But without vigilance I would think that students' concentration wanders and we have more on our screens than Pythagoras Theorem.

In a couple of weeks, you embark on the Term 3 holidays, knowing that those 2 weeks will be a time for reflection and renewal - a time for planning programs for Term 4. Therefore, they are not holidays as such, they never are. A holiday is a time when all thinking of work is absent, all thoughts about the future exclude work. I doubt whether any of you as the committed and dedicated staff of Salesian College would be included in this so called holiday. Maybe we can come up with a more accurate word for the 2 weeks when the students aren't here. A crude name would be a student free 2 weeks!

On behalf of our College Board I thank you and encourage you to fulfil your vocation by conviction not just by convention – continue to challenge yourself and continue learning from each other, supporting one another for the sake of ongoing improvement and to making a difference.

And to finish off with a challenge - the Catholic Church is holding a Plenary Council in 2020 with the focus of *WHAT is the Catholic Church in Australia asking of us?* I hope you as a staff can engage in a dialogue as a staff community to provide some feedback, input into the conversation! Your opportunity to discuss and discern around this issue I'm sure will be provided to you and knowing the quality of staff we have at Salesian College some valuable insights will result and the feedback will be greatly appreciated.

Thank you and God bless you and the valuable work you do at Salesian College!