



A WORD FROM OUR CEO/PRINCIPAL

During Term Three we have welcomed a number of visitors to Mater Dei: fourth year medical students from the University of Western Sydney, colleague Principals from Good Samaritan Colleges in Victoria and Queensland, friends, supporters and generous benefactors of Mater Dei. Each in their own way enriched the life of our school

by their visit and by their interest in our work.

Perhaps more significantly, each is themselves enriched by their encounter with our students and our community here. I have yet to meet a visitor to Mater Dei who is not touched in some way, from the simple to the profound, by their experience of being here.

Recently, I attended an inter school basketball carnival in Wollongong for Catholic schools in the Wollongong Diocese. During the day I was approached by a student who identified herself as a Year Ten student from St Mary's Star of the Sea College. This delightful and confident young lady had recognised me from her visit to Mater Dei with other students from St Mary's on the day of our Feast Day celebrations in June. After introducing herself, she went on to say what a great day she had experienced at Mater Dei and that she and her friend had been inspired to return to school and renew their efforts to remain in solidarity with our students and our community at Mater Dei. Similarly, a delightful young lady from Mount Carmel Catholic High School who had been helping with face painting on our Feast Day reported to her teacher on the way back to school that "I am going to work with those children when I leave school".

What an extraordinary gift our students have to impact on the lives of others. And perhaps the gift is simply that; the experience of being with our students. So often in life, we filter our experiences; because of our inclination to be judgemental, our propensity to be self serving and our vulnerability to be captive to the superficial values promoted in advertising and the media.

As Irish theologian Fr Daniel O'Leary writes; "Our experience is pure when we hold no filtering lens, no preconceived notions. You cannot really experience reality with the judgemental mind because you are dividing the moment before you give yourself to it. You are not free to receive". At Mater Dei, our students teach us to live in the present, to value what we have rather than wish for what we have not, to be non judgemental and to be authentically who we are. What you experience at Mater Dei is what is real for the time you are here. That is an extraordinary gift.

The past few months as always have been rich in experiences for our community.

The celebration of the Feast of St Benedict in June was once again a great day for our extended community. Mass was a highlight of the day as we were joined by many Catholic primary and secondary schools from both the Wollongong Diocese and the Good Samaritan network of schools. We were especially grateful for the music provided by the staff and students of St Gregory's College that added another dimension to our Mass. The children sang beautifully. Mass was followed by morning tea and then the presentation of our two St Benedict awards; the award for Community was presented to retired board member John Le Breton and the award for Hospitality was presented to Year Seven student, Victor Fineanganofu.

Our annual athletics carnival was also conducted in beautiful sunshine here at school and with the support of many mums and others who provided a cake stall, it was a great day of fun and friendship. G-Day was similarly a wonderful community day as have been all the other events that are reported on in this issue of Matters.

On a final note, with spring and summer fast approaching, we look forward to finalising landscaping with a view to formally opening our new buildings in Term One 2012.

Best Wishes
Tony Fitzgerald