

Principal's Speech to the St. Leo's Catholic School Community: 14th December 2011

It certainly doesn't seem a year since we gathered together for our last Leavers Mass: a definite sign at how once again we have had a busy and productive year.

The Mercy tradition, with the core Mercy values of Justice; Service; Respect for Human Dignity, Compassion, and Care for the Poor, are central to much that we do as a Catholic School. We always start the year with a school wide focus on the values of the Mercy tradition.

Reviewing the core Mercy values at the beginning of the year helps build a positive platform for the year ahead. There have been several times during 2011 that these Mercy Values have been exemplified through the efforts of our children and families.

Like all of New Zealand, we were deeply affected by the devastation that occurred with the Earthquake in Christchurch. The children of our school raised \$580 through various fundraising efforts such as sausage sizzles, mufti days and selling cupcakes. During the Winter a group of our Year 4&5 boys organised a toy and book sale over several lunchtimes, raising \$105 for Caritas. More recently our Year Leaders have held a raffle to raise funds for the school to sponsor a child through World Vision. This will now become an on-going out-reach activity for the school during 2012 and beyond.

We also reinforced these Mercy values with our giving of gifts that were placed under the Jesse tree during Advent Liturgy to a number of elderly, sick, lonely or needy members of our parish, and to de Paul House. The joy of giving is so much a special part of the Advent season and I thank all of you on behalf of the recipients, for contributing the gifts and to Francisca Knottenbelt, Coreena Rooke and Kim Byrne who spent time delivering the gifts on your behalf last week.

2011 has been a year of many highlights. The children were involved with a number of exciting activities both at school and off site. It is hard to know where to start but events that spring to mind are our mini Ball teams continuing to compete with excellence in the North Shore competition. We introduced Hockey in 2011, with our one Year 3&4 Team winning their Winter competition. This enthusiasm resulted in us having three teams in the Summer League and this week all three made the playoff finals!

The Cross Country Team performed competitively at the Catholic Schools Team Competition. We also had a number of winners and place getters at various Peninsula School events. We have enjoyed participating in various Kiwi Sports throughout the year – swimming, rippa rugby, hockey, tennis and volleyball.

We were visited and entertained at school by Michael Mangan, ASB Financial Literacy, Kids for Drama, and just last week by Police Dogs.

We visited St Patrick's Cathedral for our Beginning of the Year School Mass and the Navy Museum as part of our learning about our local environment also early in the school year. We helped clean up Torpedo Bay in the Summer and then cleaned up Windsor Reserve Beach in readiness for the Rugby World Cup, in conjunction with the Sir Peter Blake Trust. We also had awesome displays supporting the Italian and Japanese rugby teams in Correlis and the Arcade.

We showcased our dancing talents and singing talents at the Pensinsula Dance and Choir festivals, and of course we had our own TV and radio star featuring through out the rugby season

It is also timely to thank those parents that have given donations and sponsorship to the school, both during the year and also for the fair. As you know, this year's fair raised \$30,000, which was a huge effort. Also, thank you to John Ashton of Devonport New World for his continued generous sponsorship towards the school. It is through these donations that extras such as the \$45,000 worth of new ipods, ipads, MacBooks and IMacs we have bought this year can be purchased.

A huge thank you to all the parents that have helped in many ways during the year – such as on school trips, Waterwise, road crossing, in the classrooms, in sports coaching.

Tomorrow, the year six children are leaving us to start their next stage of schooling at intermediate. We thank them for their contributions and leadership to the school and wish them all our blessings.

We farewell the following families: Butler-Kettle, Craig, Cunliffe, Dainton, Garea, Howe-Smith, Jogia, Kelly, Ratu, Sheehan, Steffen, and Trenton. Some of these families have had very long associations with the school. We thank them all for their contributions to the school in various ways.

I wish to thank Father Chris and Father Paddy, Stephen Bell, Anne Gilfoyle, Max Laloli and the Parish, for their co-operation and partnership in the faith formation of the children during the year. The links between Parish, School and Home are integral to the special character of the school and the celebration of our Catholic faith.

I wish to thank the Board of Trustees and PTFA for all their efforts over the year in making our school the **best** little school in Devonport. It has been a challenging and somewhat frustrating year in regard to our proposed building project. We are very hopeful that progress will soon occur and we will have that long awaited for library, administration block and classroom underway in the New Year.

I wish to publicly acknowledge my wonderful staff for all their hard work in the office, classrooms and grounds. They each contribute many gifts that all help make St. Leo's a great little school. I wish to thank them for all their tremendous and dedicated efforts they make each day for all of our children. The rewards of their efforts and excellent teaching are evident in the continuing academic attainment at a high level.

As we prepare to leave this place and go onwards to new discoveries and new challenges, let us ask for God's blessing.

May you have the gladness of Christmas which is hope;
The spirit of Christmas which is peace;
The heart of Christmas which is love.

I wish you all a safe, happy and Holy Christmas and we will see most of you back here on Thursday February 2nd 2012 to start another successful and exciting school year!

God Bless!