

17th April 2020

Dear Families,

I just wanted to send a message to the Damascus community at the end of our first week of remote learning to say thank you to students, staff and families. Thank you for your flexibility and patience, thank you for your understanding and kindness and thank you for connecting in and supporting one another.

As we conclude this first week, there is so much to be proud of, and I want to acknowledge students, staff and families for your willingness to engage in one of the most significant educational changes any of us have ever experienced.

As we move into next week, we are all learning what is working well and what is challenging. We will make refinements, but we need to persist with some new things to gain a genuine understanding of what works and what doesn't. People's resilience through this time has also been quite extraordinary, and I urge you to stick with the things that are difficult as we are all in this together.

To our student population, what a great effort you have all made and to see the work produced and the efforts to connect are awesome. In order to help students stay safe and understand their responsibilities in an online environment, I encourage students to revisit the ICT User Agreement. Particularly with regard to staying safe online and respecting privacy. I have attached ICT User Agreement to this email for your information.

Next week, I will revert to my regular Wednesday newsletter as my primary form of communication.

I remind families of our communication channels. For general enquiries, info@damascus.vic.edu.au or the College phone number 53372222 should be the first port of call. Technology related concerns, please contact Helpdesk@damascus.vic.edu.au and please refer to my correspondence of the 9th April for guidelines on how to seek support from the IT Helpdesk most efficiently.

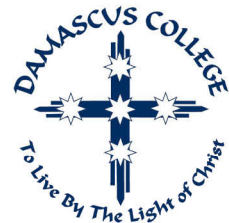
We have experienced some difficulties with our roll marking this week, and we appreciate that families continue to advise us of student's attendance, particularly if the student has not been able to make contact through TA time. We are marking rolls at 8:55am and at 3:15pm. I am confident we will all establish stronger routines in this space next week.

As we head into this weekend, I just want to finish this communication, as I began, with a few words of gratitude.

As you may be aware, we are now in this season of Easter, the period which follows the Easter Sunday.

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In this Sunday's Gospel we encounter St Thomas, doubting Thomas - I always thought Thomas got a bad rap for his disbelief, as I think by today's standards, he certainly had a pretty natural scepticism.

He said

'Unless I see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe.'

The scripture then moves from sceptical Thomas to believing Thomas through the presence of the risen Jesus and his direct encounter.

I think as a community we could all have legitimately have borne a healthy amount of scepticism about our capacity to achieve what we have in the time we have had available. So my prayer of gratitude today for our belief and achievement, reflects those beautiful words the risen Jesus utters in this Gospel, in Thomas' presence to each of us – "Peace be with you".

May the peace and the gratitude of the entire Damascus community be with you all, for your contribution to making this significant change in order to keep the people of this community safe. Thank you and AMEN!

Until next week ...

Kind regards

Matthew Byrne
Principal