

**Address by the Head of St Mark's College, Adelaide, Professor Don Markwell,  
at the College Final Service, St Peter's Cathedral, Adelaide,  
Saturday 31 October 2020**

Well, what a year we have had!

And, no, I am not just referring to the pandemic, but – above all – to the remarkable things that together we have achieved this year despite it.

It may be a little unseemly to boast in a Cathedral, but it is simply true that, two weekends ago, we added a victory in the athletics to our victories in tennis, swimming, and football, and good efforts in other inter-college contests, to bring the High Table Cup back to its rightful place.

At the end of first semester, we secured outstanding overall academic results, with many superb individual achievements.

And throughout the year, in good times and in harder times, we have seen many acts of leadership and, above all, of heartfelt and selfless service throughout our College community – actions, large and small, to help fellow students and to help members of the wider community. One focus of this service has been protecting the environment.

I want to congratulate and thank every member of the College who has contributed to a year of academic success, of sporting success, and of success in so many other ways – including, importantly, in service to others.

Together this year we have shown that good things can come out of adversity, and that the ideal of which the Chaplain spoke – of St Mark's as a service-oriented community – is alive and well.

Some of you have heard me mention previously that, in preparation for marking the centenary of milestones to the founding of the College in 1925, I have been reading documents prepared by the founders of the College in the early 1920s to encourage support, including philanthropic support, for the creation of St Mark's. I have been struck by how strongly they believed in the importance and value of students living and learning together in College for promoting what they called "ideals of service".

This ideal is reflected in the College prayer, which we have prayed today, where we ask God to "give to all who study here a true love of knowledge ... so that we may be equipped for service."

This ideal is also reflected in the College hymn we sang – many of us for the first time ever – at the start of this service. The College hymn points out that the College was built "to honour [God] and benefit posterity". It asks that the wisdom of "those who teach and those who learn" may be turned "from selfish ends" to the service of others.

In the Commencement Service at the start of this year, I quoted the first Master of the College, Sir Archibald Grenfell Price, speaking about how another of the founders of the College, Charles Hawker, combined “a trained academic mind” with “his desire to serve” – evident in Hawker’s case both in his service as a soldier and as a significant Australian federal politician who might well have become Prime Minister had he not been killed in a plane crash 82 years ago this week.

In his memory, Charles Hawker’s sister, Lillas Needham, was extremely generous to St Mark’s College, including helping to make it possible for the College to purchase Hawker House. But she was insistent that there be no public recognition of her generosity to the College in her lifetime. It was only after her death that the College was able to acknowledge all she had done.

Lillas Needham is an example of selfless service. Tonight, towards the end of the Final Dinner, we will award Lillas Needham Medals to two members of the College who have also given outstanding examples of selfless service – of acting in a generous spirit for the good of others rather than for their own glory.

Lillas Needham was a great benefactor of St Mark’s College. The College hymn asks that what it called “the generous spirit, vision clear, and patient labours we revere in benefactors ... may be revealed in us continually”.

This alludes to the great tradition in the St Mark’s community that, being grateful for all the benefits we have received here from the generosity and labours of those who have gone before us, members of the College will do all they can in later life to hand those benefits and opportunities on to generations of students who come after them.

Your membership of this College and of its global community does not end on going out of residence in the College. You remain a member of St Mark’s for life, and I hope that every member of the College who is leaving at the end of this year will remain connected with the College over the years and decades ahead – connected, not least, by the lifelong friendships I am confident you have made and are making here.

The College hymn asks –  
“may we all our days pursue  
the good, the beautiful, the true”.

It’s a bit like the College motto – translated as meaning that “excellence reaches for the stars”.

Whether you are leaving at the end of this year, or returning to College for next year for what we hope will be an outstanding year, building on the success of 2020, I hope that you will reach for the stars, both in your own achievements and in your service to others, always pursuing “the good, the beautiful, the true”.

Congratulations on 2020, good luck for the assessments ahead, and let us all work to ensure that the best is yet to come.