

Good afternoon, Mr Ronchetti, Mr. Casey, parents and carers, staff, fellow students, and wider College community.

I wonder if any of you have ever considered gardening, perhaps as a profession or maybe as a past time. Gardening, I think, is quite a noble activity. You're undertaking the responsibility of caring for living organisms, committing to the tilling and tending of flowers and trees and insects and reptiles that might inhabit this microcosm of God's creation. In effect, you are dedicating yourself to sustaining something beautiful.

I think St Pius is a bit like a garden. We students are the seeds that have been planted, watered and tended to, some of us for many years. Our college is a place abundant with opportunities to grow and develop. A gentle hand and a safe environment has enabled us to flourish as young men ready to serve.

Today, I wish to draw your attention again to the opportunities here at Pius on offer to you. But I don't wish to stop there. We are fortunate to have access to the structure and support that nourishes us as students and leaders. But these kind of opportunities warrant action, a call to service, to a make difference. This concept has shaped the direction of the 2024 leadership team and I will speak about how you can join in this, alongside us. If our school is like a garden, then we have a responsibility to care and nurture. Together, we too can sustain something beautiful.

I am proud to say that at St Pius, there is an abundance of opportunities for students, each accompanied by supportive staff and incredible resources. These opportunities, whether in sporting, academic or cultural aspects of the College, nurture and grow our skills to eventually enable us to flourish as young men, part of a wider inclusive community. Throughout the upcoming year I urge every one of us to truly immerse ourselves in the life, culture and unified body that we call St Pius, taking every opportunity to step into discomfort, to embrace growth when we fail, and to pursue our passions.

As I was writing this speech, I kept asking myself, what makes St Pius special? What is it here at this concrete jungle in the heart of Chatswood that sets us apart? Most schools like us play rugby, offer drama and compete in debating. But there is something that we aspire to be, something that our former principal touched on in his address at the 2023 Student Leader's investiture. Mr. Couani reminded us that here at Pius we want to pursue a culture where "leadership is characterized by service and compassion, humility and care for others, from the youngest to the oldest, to those in greatest need and those of greatest difference". This reminded me that yes, we are fortunate to have boundless opportunities here at Pius, however, the purpose of this environment is to nurture these God-given gifts to serve, where the fruits of this community can be put towards helping others. We shouldn't ask 'what can others do for me,' but 'what can I do for others?' I think a faithful example of someone who encapsulates this is Mr. Russo. You, sir, have humbly served our community by providing support and care for those struggling. Equally, our prayers and support are with you and your family as you step into this next chapter. You will always be part of this Pius family.

The beauty of being a family is that we all have different roles to play. St Pius offers several opportunities to serve, such as helping at the Matthew Talbot Hostel, getting involved in the Buddy Mentor Program, or joining the Edmund Rice Society. But it's not just about what we do out "there"; we can serve right here, at school. Maybe it looks like listening to your teacher when you would rather chat to a mate, or passing a handball to a younger student when you could boot it into next week. These are all ways in which students cannot only grow as leaders, but also cultivate a culture of service, which will flourish when we support those in greatest need, and those of greatest difference.

Mother Teresa puts it simply:

"Give your hands to serve, and your hearts to love."

This concept of unified growth and selflessness through service has shaped the direction of the 2024 Leadership Team for the upcoming year. The leadership team invested today, has developed a theme based on Jesus' true example of servant leadership – reading "Seek to Serve". This was inspired by Mark 10, verse 45, reminding us that 'even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve'. This calls us, as those who follow the Son of Man to lead humbly and serve lovingly. In addition to this, the 2024 Leadership team wish to encourage all students of St Pius to join with us in becoming leaders and servants. We aspire to call all students to not wait until their investiture but join with us today in our unified journey of service, to help use the fruits of our positions to truly support others.

I would also like to take this time to thank the 2023 Leadership Team, led by Eamon, Josh and Mitch, for their enthusiasm and dedication that they brought to the school throughout the past year. You're inspiring examples of leadership and emphasis on deeply listening has truly impacted the school community. Whilst also thanking the 2023 Student Leaders for their service, I would also like to thank Mr. Casey. Through your years of leadership and service to this college, you have had a profound impact on the school and wider community. For many of us, you have been our deputy principal since year 5, nurturing us all in this inclusive Pius community. The culture of the college is strong as a result of the core values you have emulated. The genuine relationships you built with each student and all of the community will not be forgotten, you have truly left your...mark. So, on behalf of the St Pius community, past and present, we extend our gratitude to you for your leadership, direction, selflessness and service, and we wish you the best of luck for your future.

For all of us, 2024 is a new start, a clean slate, a new beginning. For all of us, from our younger brothers in the Junior school right to the big boppers in A-Block, Twenty Twenty-Four is another year to learn, develop and grow. This year is a brand-new page to write the next chapter of our journey, as individuals and as a college community. Maybe it will be left blank to symbolise just another year gone by, or perhaps your page will be filled with exciting moments and significant achievements that make this year special. What you write on your page is up to you — the choice is yours.

So, let 2024 be the year that you're proud of when you read your page, your chapter and reflect on your time at St Pius.

Let 2024 be the year where together, we all grow as students, leaders and servants.

Let 2024 be the year where you tackle every challenge, grow from every setback and truly seek to serve in every opportunity that comes your way.

Thank you.

God bless.

I now invite all Year 12 students to join with me in reciting the senior's pledge.