

Good morning, everyone.

It is truly an honour to be able to address you on Remembrance Day. When reflecting on this day, I think about where I was last year, just around the corner in Irwin Barracks, completing my basic training to become a soldier of the Army Reserves. I have had the privilege of understanding the ultimate sacrifice men and women of Australia have paid and why it is so important to remember those who have died or suffered for Australia's cause.

Every night during my training we would recite the values of what it means to be an Australian soldier. These values are Courage, Respect, Excellence, Integrity and Service. We were taught that these values cannot be bought and are not a given but can be built by choosing to make sacrifices. This is what I'd like to speak to you about today, because it is not just about remembering the millions of people who have sacrificed their lives for us. It is also about remembering the kind of people they were. The values they held are the reason we have the freedoms and privileges that we enjoy.

*Courage- the strength of character to say and do the right thing always, especially in the face of adversity.*

Some of you may be familiar with the story of Trooper Mark Donaldson. For those who aren't familiar, Trooper Donaldson was the first Australian to be awarded a Victorian Cross in almost 40 years. He earned this honour due to the courage he showed whilst serving in the Afghanistan war. Trooper Donaldson put himself in direct danger by moving into enemy fire, offering his body as a target whilst fellow soldiers were moved to safety. He then crossed a further 80 meters whilst under heavy enemy fire to rescue an injured Afghan interpreter who had been left behind, carried him to safety and administered first aid. Trooper Donaldson's courage showed he was willing to go to great lengths to do what was right without considering the cost to himself.

*Respect- the humanity of character to value others and treat them with dignity.*

When reflecting on Remembrance Day we tend to think about the soldiers who fought on the frontlines but there are many unsung heroes who have played a major role in keeping our country safe. Military Nurses fall into this category, working tirelessly in an effort to ensure all casualties of war were of equal value. On the frontlines of New Guinea in 1945, the Medical Air Evacuation Unit was tasked with treating many prisoners of war who were often viewed as the enemy. Our nurses ensured they were treated with dignity despite knowing that some of them may have caused direct harm to those they cared about, the ultimate sign of respect to humanity. To this day, we as soldiers are taught to administer first aid to those who need it most, irrespective of whether they are considered a friendly or an enemy. This is the Australian way.

*Excellence- the willingness of character to strive each day to be the best I can be both professionally and personally.*

During basic training we were asked to assist in a practice operation for the SAS Regiment. For those who are not familiar with the SASR they are our most elite squad within the military, often tasked with the most difficult and challenging small team operations.

In conversation with the SASR I recognised their drive and focus in attaining the highest standards, to meet not only those that are set by the regiment but also those they set for themselves. This level of excellence begins when going through selection for the SASR. This is an extremely mentally and physically demanding process that recruits will train for at least 18 months with only 10-30% making it to the end. In order to succeed, one of the criteria candidates must meet is to carry 28kg whilst marching 20km in under 3 hours and 15 minutes. These troopers are willing to put themselves through extreme stress in striving to be the best they can.

*Integrity- the consistency of character to align my thoughts, words and actions to do what is right.*

When World War 1 broke out, female doctors were famously told to “go home and sit still.” Phoebe Chapple was a medical practitioner and a feminist and was determined to use her medical skills for something she believed in, her patriotic duty. Because the Australian defence force would not accept her enlistment, Phoebe left for England and became attached to the Royal Army Medical Corps. Phoebe was committed to do what she felt was right when everyone told her to do the opposite.

*Finally, Service- the selflessness of character to place the security and interest of our nation and its people ahead of my own.*

My cousin, Liam, was the main reason I decided to join the Army Reserves. Whilst serving in Iraq, Liam was blinded by a roadside bomb at just 19 years of age. Liam has always maintained he has no regrets in choosing to serve his country and has never looked for praise or accolades. He simply did his duty. Whilst this sacrifice has meant he has faced challenges he has gone on to live a fulfilling life. I am incredibly proud of him.

It is tradition that we pause for one minute on Remembrance Day to honour the memory of those who have served, those who are currently serving and those we have lost to the cause. I encourage you to not only think of the sacrifice Australian’s have made, but also the types of people they were and the values they held. It is important that, as John XXIII College community members, we strive to have strong values, so that we are building a community worthy of the sacrifice these Australians have made.

Thank you.