



23 July 2020

Dear Friends and Colleagues

I write to you with warm greetings in the midst of a bleak Melbourne winter.

I counted yesterday, that over the last 13 years, I have written over 70 letters to staff in our schools and offices across the country. What a privilege it has been to share my thoughts and reflections on our mission, identity and the themes that unite us. I can only pray that some of it has been helpful.

Now, as I prepare to leave EREA, this will be one of the last times that I have the honour of sharing my thoughts with you in this privileged way. I am so grateful.

Recently, I came across the following words from Felix Adler:

We should teach our children nothing which they shall ever need to unlearn; we should strive to transmit to them the best possessions, the truest thought, the noblest sentiments of the age in which we live.

The stark truth and profound simplicity of these words spoke to me deeply.

And so, as I prepare to finish my time in EREA, and after 40 years in Catholic education, the following thoughts speak to the lessons and life wisdom that I would like our young people to imbibe through their education in an Edmund Rice school. Please use my thoughts as a springboard to those of your own.

My dear young person, as you create a future for yourself and for our world:

Resist shallow definitions of what constitutes a worthwhile and valuable life and overcome insular thinking, fear, narrowness and intolerance. Reject versions of the world that define success solely in terms of money, accumulation of things and over emphasis on status and security. Understand that not everything of value can be measured.

Be happy, but know that lasting happiness is always closer to contentment and inner peace than it is to sensual pleasure, which can be fleeting and unsustainable. Know that true happiness abides in an open, loving and compassionate heart.

Choose wisely and engage with the world on your own terms. Claim your freedom to love, to choose truth, to do good, to create the beautiful. But also, reject the ugly, the false and the mean spirited.

Unshackle yourself from unexamined opinions and inherited prejudices and embrace the capacity to question and make meaning, to contribute and live reflectively and compassionately. Aspire to a life of equanimity and harmony, independent of the approval or good opinion of others.

Know that happiness cannot be purchased, travelled to, arrived at, owned, accumulated, earned, worn or consumed. The road to happiness lies not through the continual promotion of our own self-interest, but through living a life of service for others.

Enjoy your precious life, but avoid a sense of entitlement. Be grateful and remember that the hardest arithmetic that we will ever be called to master is that which enables us to count our blessings. The future of our world is dependent upon you thinking more of the common good than your own self-advancement.

In a world that can be toxic to self-directed thinking, follow your inner guide and advance confidently in the direction of your dreams. Resist being pushed around by peer pressure, by prejudices and delusions and from potential nonsense that can masquerade as truth.

Never measure your worth by how much you accumulate or how much you consume and be free from shallow ambitions. Look at society through the prism of your values and insist that it lives up to its highest ideals.

You are privileged to have the opportunity for education so study hard and always do your best. Yes, aim high but know that the results you receive at the end of your formal schooling do not define or limit you. Your true vocation in life is too sacred to be determined solely by exam results or university entrance.

Be of good character and strong in your convictions, built on the very best wisdom of the ages. Know that you need not be perfect and that our shared human condition gives us this concession. Commit to authenticity and a passion for self-realisation. Learn from your mistakes and grow through your failures. You don't have to be perfect but be authentic, consistent with your inner moral compass.

In times of great adversity, know that your God will not abandon you. It is in the toughest moments of your life that you will know most profoundly of our utter dependence on the grace of the Divine to get us through and prevail against adversity. This can be a great blessing indeed!

Be grateful for the simple blessings and opportunities in your life. Time with family and friends, in person, not via a screen. The freedom to travel to, explore and learn from other cultures. The Coronavirus has taught us that we should never take these simple things for granted.

Please know that it is not adversity that will define you and your contribution, but rather, it is the way you respond and find the inner resources to become a better person that will define your real mark on the world.

Discover presence and stillness in your life. Take the time to know silence. Much of the world has a vested interest in keeping us restless, craving for more and unknowing of when enough is enough.

Accept our Gospel's claims about the way in which human beings should engage in our world, about justice, about the way in which we are expected to relate to one another and about the dignity of every human life.

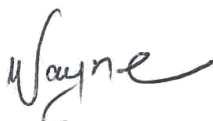
Seek inspiration and guidance from the experience of Jesus who lived his humanity so completely, so lovingly and so selflessly, that he revealed the very essence of God.

As well, learn from each of our great world traditions of spirituality, as they are a call to the mind of the One God, different roads converging upon the same point. Each shine light on the deep human questions of life that we must all answer.

Know that, when all is said and done, your life's mission and purpose is simply to be the loving, compassionate and inclusive face of the Divine to all you meet. We are created by love, from love, for love.

May you and your families stay safe and thrive through these most difficult of times.

With best wishes and much gratitude.



Wayne Tinsey