

It is my privilege as College Chair to welcome you all to the Senior College Festival Morning Tea, and to address these lovely young people, our Class of 2020.

Firstly though, I would like to acknowledge your parents and thank them for acting on the idea that Steiner education would be good for you, their children, as well as acknowledge all that they have done to contribute to the life of our school over the years. For some parents your graduation marks the end of *their* journey at Little Yarra, and so we farewell them also.

Class 12s, you have had an incredible year this year. Twelve months ago, we could not have imagined the experience that was coming towards you as Class 12 students. That you are standing here today is a testament to your adaptability, tenacity and positivity – even if things didn't always seem easy.

I would now like to give you a glimpse of a picture that your teachers study and work out of, in order to give you this wonderful gift that is Steiner education.

Rudolf Steiner gave many detailed pictures of the human being and urged teachers to continually develop and deepen their understanding of this

complex and mysterious being, which is full of riddles and wonders – so that you may be taught in a way that supports your healthy development; to prepare you to be flexible yet steadfast, as your life unfolds. (This year has possibly left you feeling like you have flexed the “flexible and steadfast” muscle quite extensively!)

Your teachers work out of the idea that a proper nurturing of the virtues of imitation in the kindergarten), reverence through the class-teacher period, and love in the high school years “creates mature adults who are inwardly prepared to fulfil the demands of a truly healthy social life and assume the responsibilities of cultural freedom, legal equality and economic brotherhood”.<sup>1</sup>

And, Steiner reminds us, if we want to think of a wholesome future for humankind, we must not count on the one-sided development of the intelligence<sup>2</sup>, which has become such a blinding focus of our time.

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<sup>1</sup> Cover Copy, *Education as Force for Social Change* by Rudolf Steiner

<sup>2</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *Education as a Social Problem: Lecture V: The Metamorphoses of Human Intelligence: Present Trends and Dangers*

In considering the human being we can say that beyond what we are given through heredity and our environment, lives a core of individuality. Only so much is determined by the physical world – that is out of our genetics and our environment – there is always more: something individual, something of the spirit.

The process of maturing is a dynamic one; the human being is constantly transforming and moving towards greater completeness and expression. We all naturally want to be better people, and this is at the centre of what it is to be human: to strive for some kind of higher expression. This includes taking hold of what life gives us, with all its struggles and crises, and elevating it to a higher level.<sup>3</sup>

Along these lines of thought, it is important that we all nurture within ourselves, an enthusiasm for life so that we can lift what life gives us to a higher level. And something that can restore our sense of enthusiasm for life is being in the natural world. It is often these experiences in nature that realign us with what is important in life. To take time to notice the miracle of a blossom, to wonder at the call of a bird, to be mesmerised by the patterns in

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<sup>3</sup> Martyn Rawson and Tobias Richter, *Waldorf Education*

the sand on the beach. These are all-important in fostering our sense of awe and wonder, and enthusiasm for life.

Marine biologist and conservationist, Rachel Carson, put this eloquently. She said:

*Those who dwell, among the beauties or mysteries of the earth are never alone or weary of life... Their thoughts can find paths that lead to inner contentment and to renewed excitement in living. Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts.*<sup>4</sup>

These experiences of nature also soften us. Perhaps you have seen *My Octopus Teacher*<sup>5</sup> where, off the South African coast, Craig Foster befriends an octopus and visits her each day for about a year. It is an amazingly touching film – but what struck me quite strongly was when Craig talked about his son who enjoys diving with him. Of his son, Craig said that all this time in nature has made him gentle.

And gentle is what the world needs because gentle makes us perceptive; helps us listen to, observe and understand the other. And life is, after all, about

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<sup>4</sup> Rachel Carson, *The Sense of Wonder*

<sup>5</sup> Craig Foster (producer), *My Octopus Teacher*

being with people. We can achieve all sorts of things in our lives at an individual level, but at the end of the day it's our connection with other human beings that matters, and our achievements don't mean much if we don't have each other.

Besides fostering this connection to nature and each other, it is really supportive to have an artistic or craft project on the go – to create things of beauty for your own pleasure. There are many ways to have this in your life and one of the many I enjoy is knitting. A friend of mine says, "A knot on the outside undoes a knot on the inside."

So, I give to you as one of your graduating gifts, your very own set of wooden knitting needles. Not just any knitting needles – you'll be excited to know that being Class 12 graduates, you have earned 4mm needles and can use 8ply yarn now!

To close on a reverential note, I would like to read you the verse that Rudolf Steiner wrote for the graduating class of 1924:

*In the ever-widening paths of life,*

*May there be reflected,*

*What in the golden years of youth,*

*Impressed itself into the heart*

*Like a seal of true humanity.*

*May, what the soul was granted to find*

*In heart-warmed companionship*

*Show its strength in the depths of memory –*

*Through the spiritual guidance of the strong forces*

*Of a cherished schooling for life.<sup>6</sup>*

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So as the adaptable, enthusiastic, and continually developing young adults that you are, may you always find inner contentment and renewed excitement in living as long as your life lasts.

Best wishes Class 12!

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<sup>6</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *Towards the Deepening of Waldorf Education*