



THE LINK

*A fortnightly Newsletter for the pupils, parents and staff of
St Michael's Catholic College
Issue 231- September 2024*



Dear Readers,

It is wonderful to have the St Michael's community back together again at the start of the new academic year and to welcome our new Year 7 and 12 students, as well as the new members of staff.

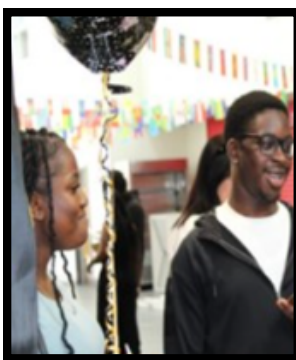
We will be supporting them to settle in quickly so that they can play a full and active role in college life.

In the start of term assemblies I reminded students that everything we do at St Michael's is underpinned by Gospel values and the Salesian values of respect, understanding, affection and humour. These essential values combined with the very many gifts and talents of our students and staff, enable us to create a community of service at St Michael's where all are respected, loved, included and celebrated for who they are. At St Michael's all are welcome and each individual has a responsibility to make a positive contribution to the college so that it is a happy, safe, calm and well organised place where students are brought to the fullness of life by the highest quality education and pastoral care. In these assemblies we also celebrated the success of the Year 11 and Year 13 students who achieved exceptional GCSE, A' Level and CTEC results this summer and the contribution of all students to the St Michael's community last year.

We have another busy year ahead, filled with so much hope and possibility and it will be one where our students will be supported by our hard working and dedicated staff to fulfil their potential and make the most of the many opportunities that come their way. I enjoyed meeting parents and carers at the recent curriculum evenings and look forward to seeing you at other college events throughout the year.

Finally, I wanted to share some important news with regard to two former members of the St Michael's community who sadly passed away during the last 2 weeks of the summer break. The first is Canon Michael Cooley, who died on the 19th August. Canon Cooley was actively involved in all aspects of Catholic life at St Michael's, was also a dedicated Governor here until 2016 and was the long standing Vice Chair during this time. He also supported one of our feeder primary schools, St Joseph's Borough as parish priest and governor. The second is John Buckley, former History teacher, Head of History and member of the senior leadership team who died on Friday 30th August following a recent serious illness. Mr Buckley worked at St Michael's for 21 years, up until autumn 2016. Both Canon Cooley and Mr Buckley have many friends and former colleagues amongst the current staff and governors and many of you may be former students or parents of students who knew them. I know that you will join me in keeping their families, friends and loved ones in your thoughts and prayers at this time, may they rest in peace and rise in glory.

Best wishes
Ms F. Corcoran
Principal



From DNA to Depression Exploring the genetics of mental health

St Michael's Catholic College were overjoyed to welcome Dr Jacob Knyspel to the college for an informative lecture on the relations between mental health issues and genetics. As someone whose knowledge is unmatched in this field, he made sure to explain each point clearly and thoroughly. As a triple science student, I found it both interesting and helpful to be in a lecture that covered a topic that I was studying in detail, but also enjoyed the broadness that came with studying at university level. I particularly enjoyed the case study on the biggest twin study in the UK (Twins UK), which provides a real-life example of how the relatively low genetic variation and, therefore, high exchangeability of identical twins can be used to humanity's advantage in order to find the causes of certain diseases. Another example used was the company '23 and Me', which had the interesting offer of telling you how likely you were to get a certain disease along with its ancestry test. With the exploration of this company, a great opportunity was capitalised on to bring up the arguments against genetic studies - in this case, that one may not enjoy the idea of finding out that one has a genetically higher likelihood of getting dementia. One more thing that really stood out to me was the use of an analogy at the end that perfectly summed up the relationship between mental health issues, and a person's genotype. A person with a low genetic chance of getting depression has a close to empty jar. A person with a high chance would have a jar closer to full. The jar will fill up if the person goes through traumatic, disturbing, or stressful events. An overflowing jar shows depression. While some people may be born with empty jars, and some with near full jars, nobody is immune to depression, nor is anybody bound to it from birth, or condemned to it based on an experience.

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Everyone has their own jar



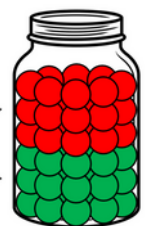
Mental health jar

Your mental health is like a **jar** that can fill with harmful things.

Some things are **environmental**.

Some things are **genetic**.

Mental health conditions occur when the jar **overflows**.



Chaplaincy Corner

The Word of the Lord

Mark 4:1-20 – The Parable of the Sower

Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times."

Then Jesus said, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."

When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that,

"they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!"

Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? The farmer sows the word. Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown."

What's been happening in the faith life of the school?

- The start of the year began as it always does with the Year 7 Welcome Mass at Most Holy Trinity Dockhead, led by Canon Alan. Miss Casey selected readers to share the Good News of Jesus Christ and to lead the year group in Bidding Prayers. Mr and Mrs Laurence accompanied the congregation on the piano. We started with 'All Our Welcome' – the song chosen to represent our college ethos.
- Preparations are underway for St Michael's Feast Day, sixth formers and Miss Casey are working to arrange a host of fundraising activities to support the work of CAFOD
- As a college we remembered in Friday Mass the lives of Canon Cooley and Mr Buckley, members of our college community who sadly died over the summer holiday. Memorials have been planned for these vital people in our college history
- Fr Keith returned to Friday Mass with the first Mass shared by 11 Mazzarello, he shared the Gospel of the day – the Parable of the Sower – and reminded the students as they embark upon Year 11 that they reap what they sow and nurture
- Ms Corcoran and Mr Kelly attended the Diocesan start of the Year Mass at St George's Cathedral along with 6 of our student chaplains and their counterparts from St Benedict CAT schools.
- Mr Kelly and Miss Casey attended Mass at one of our feeder schools, St Josephs, Gomm Road. It was a special Mass for our Trust and diocese to celebrate Educators and the impact they have.

**Chaplaincy Corner
(continued)**

A Reflection to start the year...

Jesus, you sow yourself
The Word of Truth, generously
The Word of Life, graciously

Defend us from the Evil One
Who seeks to snatch us away

Fortify us for hard times and costly discipleship
That we may endure

Deliver us from distraction
From worldly desires and
All that would lure us and choke us with false
promises

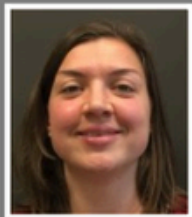
Till us
Turn us

Enrich us with every blessing of your Spirit
That we may be good, good soil
Forever faithful and fruitful for you
Amen

Miss Casey
Chaplaincy Co-Ordinator



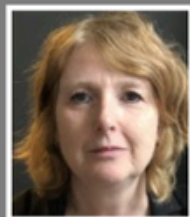
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