



My dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Grace and peace to you.

In recent weeks I have been reflecting on the year we have all just experienced, one where the COVID pandemic has once again impacted on our lives in a variety of ways. I have been very much aware of the work undertaken by schools in this time and have been mindful of the support offered to students and families by teachers and leaders. In my discussions with parents and students, I have been heartened in hearing how students have adapted to changed conditions and circumstances, working hard to achieve their personal goals.

In *Lanterns*, a Birds of Tokyo song that is a personal favourite of mine, Ian Kenny sings:

*On we march  
With a midnight song  
We will light our way  
With our lanterns on  
On we march  
'Till we meet the dawn  
We will light our way  
With our lanterns on*

*Birds of Tokyo, Lantern*

Throughout the song, the band reflect on their sense of community and their attempt to reach out to others with a positive message. The lyrics still hold true today, as does the message at the song's heart.

In listening to this song today, I am struck by the many and varied ways that students, teachers, leaders and others have been lights for and to each other during extended periods of enforced separation and remote learning. This work has been shared in our parishes too, with priests of the diocese working to share with school communities the light of Christ today, the Good News that is at the heart of every endeavour of the Church and Catholic school.

Pope Francis, in reflecting on the Church today, sees a pilgrim and evangelising people that is much more than the institution it might be seen to be. For Francis, the Church is a community walking together, a community whose actions are directed towards improving the living conditions of all people so that all can live in dignity.

**MOST REVEREND GREGORY BENNET BISHOP OF SALE**

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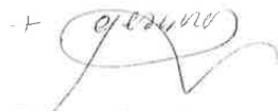
Like the call in the refrain to *Lanterns* I shared above, a call for each of us to light the many and varied paths of the journeys we are on, not just for ourselves but for others, the Gospel is a light for the path that orients people towards full fellowship in community. This light that is the Good News illuminates us all and holds an ever-surprising message of joy that can never be exhausted.

Community is at the heart of the Church and the Pope has made the concern to know the opinion of the community of the Church a vital part of his agenda, one that I support wholeheartedly. All of us belonging to this community are on a journey together, a journey where we are called to listen to one another, because the Church is nothing more than the journeying together of God's flock along the path towards an encounter with Christ the Lord.

I will keep your community in my prayers and hope that you continue to be lanterns for each other as you navigate the paths that are your individual journeys. I pray also that at St Francis Xavier College, you may continue to build a community that welcomes the light of Christ and supports each individual as they grow in knowledge of what this light might hold for them.

With every grace and blessing,

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Bennet", with a stylized flourish underneath.

Bishop Greg Bennet  
Bishop of Sale