

First reading, (1 Cor. 1:3-9) St Paul – “I never stop thanking God for all the graces you have received through Jesus Christ...”

Luke’s Gospel, (10:17-24) tells us “Jesus, filled with joy by the Holy Spirit, said ‘I bless you, Father....’”

Joy and thanksgiving surge up out of realizing what God is doing for us. The disciples had been sent to preach the word. Came back rejoicing, in wonder at God’s power at work in the word they preached.

According to Luke, “it was then that Jesus, filled with joy by the H.S. said ‘I bless you Father,...for hiding these things...” Continues: “Then turning to his disciples he spoke to them in private, ‘happy the eyes that see what you see...”

The word whose power over evil had given those disciples such joy is the same word that we are sent to tell. And the purpose of HCS & GSC is to form us “by” that word “for” that word.

The Second Vatican Council defined ordained ministry primarily as a “ministry of the word”. Wasn’t saying only the ordained speak God’s word – all the baptized do – but saying the word defines the very existence of ministers of the word.

We need to be formed “by” the word because those who preach to others must first put their own lives up as living evidence of what God’s word can do. By assimilating God’s word/ allowing it to shape us, our lives become signs of the things we preach - the reign of God.

Even celibacy is a way of saying with our life what we are saying with our lips, namely, that “what I am telling you matters more than everything else in the world”. That’s what a prophetic ministry does: it points to something!

In and through the liturgy, especially, God’s word does what it says. Liturgy = a kind of live transmission of what God is doing. The scriptures are a kind of covering letter naming what God is doing.

“What God is doing” = everything we mean by “salvation”. But “salvation” would be a vague and distant thing if scriptures didn’t picture it for us in the very human stories & ordinary experiences of people of those times. The genius of those people – knew how to recognize (at least with hindsight) God’s involvement in their lives; and so saw themselves as part of salvation history.

In the readings of the liturgy, those stories form great back-drop where we learn to recognize God’s style – and so more easily recognize God’s fingerprints in our own lives. This is a discovery that can pull us up with surprise, wonder, gratitude & deep assurance.

As those stories are retold, former events re-enter the world – through our consciousness, - and a new encounter takes place – we are taking our place in the mega narrative of salvation history. And God’s involvement in human history continues to take flesh.

And so, looking ahead to the future, I want to say to you: treasure every opportunity to be formed “by” the word “for” the word. It will do for you what it did for Jesus’ first disciples.

And feel some responsibility for the college in which this formation is brought into focus. Pope Benedict memorably said that ordained and lay members of the Church are **co-responsible** for the Church and its mission.ⁱ He knew ordained and lay have *different roles*; he was saying that they have the *same agenda* – the Church’s agenda, the Church’s mission.

Well, the Church’s mission is what HCS is all about; that’s its purpose! Therefore even though staff and students have *different roles*, they have the *same agenda*; they share responsibility for what happens here.

Staff and students are co-responsible for ensuring the college has the right atmosphere for formation. Staff and students are co-responsible for health and safety at the college.

Staff and students are co-responsible for ensuring bishops don’t ordain individuals who have personal problems that could result in serious harm to the Catholic people, or to themselves, or to both.

Co-responsibility is the concept that banishes any sense of staff and students having different agendas: they have *different roles*, *yes, but the same agenda*. They are jointly responsible for the college’s work and its outcomes.

That’s what I invite you to see looking ahead. But this is also the time for thanksgiving and for looking back. I suggest we give thanks for:

- those who first spoke the word to us at the firesides and bedsides of our childhood – whose married lives & parenthood were our first intimations of God’s love;
- those who unfolded God’s word for us in the catechisms and classrooms of our youth;
- those who gave their lives in faithful service to God’s word in all the pulpits, confessionals, homes, parishes and villages of our growing up;
- those lay men and women, and men and women Religious, and priests who have contributed to our formation in the lecture rooms, kitchens, dining rooms, offices and chapels of HCS & GSC, often experiencing joys, sorrows & sacrifices known only to God;
- for the Catholic people who have resourced this college from hard-earned and often small incomes;
- and for those bishops, priests and people of the Dunedin diocese and Mosgiel parish where HCS’s honourable tradition began, and of which you are now the trustees.

That’s the tradition to which you all belong. In whatever way you graduate – whether in ordained ministry or some other calling – you belong. This place will never disown you. The agenda is the same for all of us, whatever our differences of role or vocation.

ⁱ Co-responsibility requires a change of mentality... the laity should be considered not as “collaborators” with the clergy, but as persons truly “co-responsible” for the being and acting of the Church”. (29 May 2009)