

A word of encouragement, gratitude and farewell to all Leaving Certs graduating throughout the diocese this summer 2020.

Thank you for your contribution to your school over the years: in friendship, in care for each other, in academics, in sport, in music, and in other ways too numerable to mention.

I am mindful of the uncertainty and pressure you each felt over the past two months. It has been very difficult, difficult to study on your own day in day out, difficult as a class not to have days to bid farewell to the school and to each other.

Congratulations on completing the Leaving Cert year. Trust that all will be well with your results, try not to spend the summer worrying and thinking negative thoughts: the results will come out in due time; for the vast, vast majority of you, by late October the next section of your path in life will have opened up ahead of you, - college, apprenticeship, whatever other personal option you choose.

2019-20 has been a year of major events outside the school gate: the Brexit saga continued; our country is now 100 days without a new government; all that Covid-19 has brought with it, those long weeks of confining ourselves to our own homes.

Three lessons I draw from Covid-19:

- Each day of your life, you have all you need to be happy and content. Find happiness in the present as it is.
- Together, united with our families and friends, united as a country, we can cope with whatever life throws at us.

- We are blessed that there are so many wonderful, talented, generous, caring people of all ages everywhere, - locally, nationally, globally.

When asked to quote something from Jesus, the following often comes to mind. It reminds me to always hope and trust in God:

Do not worry about your life and what you are to eat, or your body and how you are to clothe it. Surely life means more than food, and the body more than clothing! Look at the birds in the sky. They do not sow or reap or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they are? Your heavenly Father knows your needs. (Mt 5:25)

As you look to the future, I also think of the following piece, written in the 18th century. It urges each of us to put 'love of others' at the centre of how we live:

*But once I pass this way, and then – no more.
So while I may, with all my might
I will bring sweet comfort and delight
to all I meet upon the Pilgrim Way.
For no one travels twice the Great Highway
that climbs through darkness up to light, through night to day.
I shall pass through this world but once.
Therefore, any good that I can do,
any kind act that I can perform for any fellow-creature,
let me do it now.
Let me not delay, or omit it, for I shall not pass this way again.*

Congratulations and every blessing on all Leaving Cert 2020 students, their families and their teachers.

+ Ray Browne Diocese of Kerry May 2020