Dear Parents, Friends, Staff and Students,

With joy and exuberance, the Year 12s launched their theme for 2016 at our assembly on Tuesday: Be Bold and Go for Gold. Their theme becomes our theme, connecting to our mission, values and learning across every sphere of College life in this summer Olympic year. It will drive our spirit and passion and in these opening spirit-filled weeks of our year we can already see how this is being enacted.

B represents being prepared to show perseverance
O reminds every one of the rich opportunities we have at Mt St Michael’s
L acknowledges the importance of learning from failures as we set new challenges
D leads us to drive which is integral to our commitment to be the best we can be.

Taking on new challenges, perseverance and drive were all part of a very rich experience for 19 students, many from our younger grades, who embraced the opportunity to work with the Queensland Opera Company in their Open Stage program. Their work began at our weekend Music Camp which was another magic event in itself for over 120 students. In a short concert performance last night in the Auditorium, our young singers showed their new found talents, singing with members of the Queensland Opera Company across a range of music genres which included some Gilbert and Sullivan, with Three Little Maids from School. This was a delightful and high-quality performance; their joy and pride was so evident and also shared by their parents and grandparents.

Yesterday we commenced our Lenten journey with our Ash Wednesday Liturgy in the Sophia Centre. These six weeks leading to Easter are integral to our growth in faith, providing an opportunity to reflect, to pray and to
make small changes in our lives, as we prepare for Easter. During these weeks we give our full support to the Caritas Lenten program, not only to raise funds, but also to be more mindful of the needs of those in our human family who have much less than what we have. Our Gospel reading in the liturgy concluded with the magnificent invitation from Jesus, an invitation for all: "I have come so that you may have life, life in all its fullness."

This led me to a reflection on a story that broke over our news air waves on 16 January when the Australian surgeon Dr Ken Elliott and his wife Jocelyn were kidnapped by Islamic extremists. This Australian couple, now in their 80’s were living in the town of Dijbo in Burkina Faso, a state in West Africa. It was here that in the early 1970’s they arrived and stayed to build a hospital that now has room for 120 patients and remains the only reliable surgical service for up to two million people.

We know very little about Ken and Jocelyn Elliott except that they are devout Christians and that their motivation is “to serve the poorest of the poor”. Their extraordinary commitment can only be grounded in humility and a life of simplicity. They have given away the material riches of a professional life in Australia, but I would suggest that through their work and their service in this community, they deeply understand the meaning of “life in all its fullness”. Surely it is the esteem in which they must be held in this region that explains the recent release of Jocelyn Elliott, yet what a challenge it must have been for her to leave her husband behind. We pray for them and their families in Australia.

As we commence this season of Lent, their story is an inspiration. We may not have their extraordinary courage, but we can all make a difference in our communities. It is, after all, a very similar story to that of Mary Aikenhead and the first Sisters of Charity who came to Australia “to serve the poorest of the poor”. With our faith and the embedded values of the Gospel, that provide the foundation for our College today, we can strive to grow and learn to be better people. On Ash Wednesday with the ashes marked on our foreheads, we repent and we ask that we may hear the good news of the Gospel.

May these weeks of Lent be a time of reflection and of personal growth that leads to good actions for others. In this may we understand more deeply the invitation: “I have come so that you may have life, life in all its fullness.”
Tomorrow we celebrate our Opening Eucharist and Commissioning of our Student Leaders. We pray for all members of our community and our College as we formally mark the opening of our school year.

Sincerely,
Alison Terrey

Cynthia Webb and Megan Moore have both been awarded a QUT Women in Engineering Scholarship to the value of $6000.

Grace Egan has been awarded the Elite Athlete Scholarship from QUT to the value of $30,000.

Tanika Walker has been awarded a $30,000 Vice Chancellors Scholarship (Academic) at QUT.

Kate Richards has been accepted in Honours College at Griffith University.