Knowing God

It is hard to believe that half of the 2014 school year is past. So many positive things have happened as our College community has grown in understanding and faith. We have focused our efforts this year on knowing God through knowing Jesus.

This year brought about a new way of us gathering to remember key times in the Christian calendar as we held whole school chapel services in the Bickerdike Centre to remember Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, and Pentecost. I have been particularly encouraged by the way in which our students have participated in these services through coming forward to receive ashes on their foreheads, laying their prayer concerns at the foot of the cross, and receiving the Holy Spirit through the anointing of oil. Our Year 10 drama students did a fantastic job at the Good Friday service as they acted out the last hours of Jesus’ life. It was a moving experience for all. I have also been thankful for the support of The Very Reverend Anne Wentzel, Dean of All Saints’ Cathedral, and The Reverend Tim Fogo (Kelso) with these services.

These whole school chapels and the students’ involvement in them have complemented our regular weekly chapel programme. During Term 1 we examined the ‘I am’ statements of Jesus as we learnt more about who Jesus said he was. This term we have been considering the appearances of Jesus to his disciples after his resurrection in an effort to understand that Jesus is alive and that his promise of eternal life can therefore be trusted.

Knowing God can be a tricky thing. In his timeless classic Mere Christianity, author C.S. Lewis states:

“When you come to knowing God, the initiative lies on His side. If He does not show Himself, nothing you can do will enable you to find Him. And, in fact, He shows much more of Himself to some people than to others - not because He has favourites, but because it is impossible for Him to show Himself to a man whose whole mind and character are in the wrong condition. Just as sunlight, though it has no favourites, cannot be reflected in a dusty mirror as clearly as in a clean one.”

So, whilst we can examine Jesus’ claims about himself and consider the evidence for his resurrection, we are not guaranteed that this will bring us closer to knowing God. One crucial element remains - our attitude towards wanting to know him. Lewis points out that the initiative is on God’s side. God always wants to get to know us but it is up to us to receive him.

A famous painting by Holman Hunt shows Jesus knocking at an ivy-covered door with a lantern in His hand. Hunt was criticised because there was no latch on the outside of the door. His answer was, “Of course not. The latch is on the inside. We alone can open it.”

C.S.Lewis uses the image of the dusty mirror not reflecting light as well as a clean one. It is up to us to dust off the mirror of our heart and let the image of God be reflected in it.

“Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.” - Jesus (Revelation 3:20, NRSV)

With all the blessings of Christ.