

Good Morning Boys,

A very warm welcome to your first virtual assembly and to your first day of virtual school; I very much hope that you will enjoy the day and feel that you are still learning with the rest of the school. I am here in my study while speaking to you and the school is still up and running for the children of those key workers who are in the front line battle against coronavirus. You are not alone both in terms of your learning and in terms of the fact that we are thinking of you. Though the streets of the country are very quiet, in almost every house there are people, people going about their lives in as normal a way as possible in the circumstances. So please don't think you are alone.

So please remember what we said and ensure that, during the course of today, you are following your normal timetable just as you would as if you were at school. All your teachers will be emailing you work which you are to do, if at all possible, at the time of your normal lessons. Please email it to your teachers when it is completed and you will receive it back, marked. All your teachers will be on email during the course of the lesson if you wish to have contact with them. May I wish you the very best of luck and hope that you enjoy your online lessons.

At the beginning of this term, despite the fact that we had heard about the coronavirus, I did not imagine for one moment that I would give my assembly to you remotely. Well, things have changed throughout the world incredibly quickly, all because of a microscopic organism which none of us can see but which, if it makes contact to someone who is vulnerable, can have terrible effects. The whole of global society has temporarily changed and it could have some permanent effects. I want to say something more about this aspect.

I said to you on Friday that what I wanted you to do was to think of ways that you can make something good out of this crisis. Though of course none of us would ever have wanted this crisis to have happened, there are already aspects to it which are positive. The canals in Venice are already becoming much cleaner; animals and fish, which have not been seen in the canals for years, are reappearing. The pollution clouds over big cities such as New York are lifting and the amount of fossil fuels being used has dropped dramatically. Throughout the country, there have been many acts of kindness and thoughtfulness and community spirit. You must all think of ways you can make the most of the crisis. I mentioned to you about taking something on, a hobby, an interest, a skill; do please do that. I can't wait to hear what you choose. And what about your work?

Well, you'll be having to do all your work away from a classroom, away from your teachers and your peers. This is difficult but again I think you should see this as something from which you can learn and gain. Ultimately, schools are teaching you to become independent, to think for yourself, to be able to find things out for yourself, to be inspired to read and write, to think of ways to solve things both physical and intellectual; to be someone who has independent thoughts and who does not mind expressing them. Please use this time when you will not be in your physical class to practise independence and self-motivation.

I have decided to interrupt the set of readings I had chosen for this term and to read instead, one of my favourite psalms, number 121. In it, King David, the writer of the psalms, reminds us that God is always with us. It starts with someone who is anxious, who is wondering where his help can come from. The answer of course is God who has made everything. God is someone who does not slumber or sleep, who is always looking out for you. And as such will look after you at the beginning and the end; he will guard your body and your soul. The first line of the psalm is very well known – "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills." And in the village where we have a house in the north of England, in amongst the high mountains, there is a house which has that line, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills" painted on it. This psalm has been an inspiration for so many people throughout the ages.

<sup>1</sup> I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.

<sup>2</sup> My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.

<sup>3</sup> He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber.

<sup>4</sup> Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

<sup>5</sup> The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand.

<sup>6</sup> The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.

<sup>7</sup> The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul.

<sup>8</sup> The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

Remember all of you that God is with you, that you are surrounded by people who want the best for you. You are not alone.

Let us pray:

**Let us pray for this school, for all its pupils, staff and parents. Let us think particularly for those of our parents who are on the front line fighting the Coronavirus. Protect them and give them strength. We thank you Lord for all the friendship that we have found and all the support which we have been given at this time of difficulty. Lord help us to know your love for us.**

**Amen**

**St Patrick's breastplate**

**Christ be with me,  
Christ within me,  
Christ behind me,  
Christ before me,  
Christ beside me,  
Christ to win me,  
Christ to comfort  
and restore me.  
Christ beneath me,  
Christ above me,  
Christ in quiet,  
Christ in danger,  
Christ in hearts of  
all that love me,  
Christ in mouth of  
friend and stranger.**

Have a fruitful day and we'll catch up tomorrow.