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Thankful Tuesday 1st June 2021 : 5th Class Speech

Fellow students and Staff.

Firstly, we would like to take this opportunity to welcome everyone here today as we look forward to a day full of activities. Today is a day of celebration, a day where we acknowledge the tremendous work carried out by our nation in the fight against coronavirus. Thankfully, a lot of our parents and grandparents have been vaccinated which allows us to look forward to brighter days ahead where we can return to some normality.

The 12th of March, 2020 is a day that nobody will ever forget. The day our school, as well as every other school in the country closed for a period of two weeks in an effort to stop the spread of the virus that was spreading through the country. As panic set in among the teachers, and the photocopier went into overdrive, many of us children naively looked forward to a two week break from the classroom, little did we think that we were in store for a total of three lockdowns and continuous restrictions nearly a year and a half later. A mixed bag of emotions was evident throughout the school with both staff and children alike wondering what lay ahead.

On the 17th of March 2020, usually a national day of celebration the pandemic had truly gripped the nation. The Government met and Leo Varadkar made an announcement to the country declaring that immediate actions would have to be taken in order to best protect our country from the raging virus. Some harsh, but essential restrictions were put in place. It was truly a St. Patricks Day like no other.

In the words of Leo Varadkar

"To all the young people watching - I know you are bored and probably a bit fed up. You want to see your friends and you might even be wishing you were back at school. I hope you remember that this time is tough on your parents as well...Keep up your school work and call your grandparents and try not to fight with your brothers and sisters."

Firstly, we would like to express our heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to our Healthcare workers, many of whom are parents and grandparents in our school, or members of our community. "Not all Superheroes wear capes, some wear scrubs" is a phrase that became commonly used throughout our country during the pandemic. They were the front line of the frontline workers who put their own health at risk in order to help others. These health care workers endured exhausting hours under enormous pressure and testing conditions, all the time worrying that they may contract the virus and bring it home to their loved ones. I think it is fair to say that we are all extremely grateful to all Healthcare Workers for their dedication, compassion and sacrifice over the past year.

Please join us in a round of applause for the health care workers.

Health care workers were not the only people to keep this country moving. We had many more workers from many industries who worked tirelessly to accommodate us. The shopkeepers for providing us with food, Postmen and women for keeping us connected, the Gardaí for monitoring restrictions and public transport just to name a few.

There were many more individual members in every community who showed great bravery in helping those in need. Lots of people, many in our own parish of Donoughmore went above and beyond to ensure the most vulnerable were well taken care of while cocooning. In the words of Winston Churchill "You make a living by what you get, you make a life by what you give". Throughout the Pandemic, we saw many people both near and far taking this on board. If this Pandemic has taught us anything, I think you will all agree with me that it is to be kind to everyone around you and do what you can for others. Over the last 18 months, this became quite evident throughout the Island of Ireland and made me for one, extremely proud to be Irish.

To our Parents, a sincere thank you for keeping us safe, caring for us and providing entertainment for us during the tedious restrictions of Lockdown, even when we may have not been the easiest people to live with. I think it is fair to say that there was not a single household in Ireland who didn't experience highs and lows during lockdown. I'm sure in years to come families will look back and laugh at the arguments we had over the remote control, the whining and moaning of who's turn it was to empty the dishwasher, or the infamous question every mother hears 10 times a day "Mommom, What's for Dinner"???. Parents gave us the time and attention we needed while some continued to work on the frontline, while others took on the new norm of working from home and juggled the struggles of online learning. As we all know our parents have busy work lives without the added pressure of long division, or worse, Jolly Phonics being added to their plate.

We cannot let this day pass without mentioning our grandparents. They adhered to guidelines and cocooned. Many didn't see or hug their grandchildren for months on

end which was a difficult task for many. I'm sure many of us never expected to experience teaching our grandparents how to make a zoom call or telling them take the phone away from their ear during video call.

Finally, last but not least, our own school community both students and staff. We have already acknowledged the tremendous work our parents did throughout the lockdown but we think the real heroes are the children of our school. Over night our whole world was turned upside down. We were told stay at home we were not allowed to meet our friends, cousins or grandparents. All our trainings were cancelled with immediate effect. Any trips we had were postponed. Birthday parties and celebrations could not take place. It was surreal. However, we adapted to the new normal of social distancing and virtual meetings, phoning our grandparents and face timing our friends. In all of the madness I suppose one of our biggest worries was of how we would keep up with our school work. This was something we did not need to worry about as the staff of St. Lachteens quickly put a plan in place in order to allow us continue our learning from home. The only seesaw we knew was the one in the playground but this quickly changed as children and staff quickly upskilled. Teachers assigned interesting project work and set challenges to keep us occupied while at home. Zoom classes were also introduced for us all to experience the classroom setting once again and to keep us motivated. It was great to see our friends, teachers and SNA's, many of whom we had not seen in a very long time.

While we all really enjoyed this experience we now realise that nothing beats being back in class with our friends, teachers and SNA's. We would also like to acknowledge all the extra work being done by school staff this year and the new procedures that have been introduced in keeping in line with regulations.

Finally, we would like to wish you all the best and we hope you have a great day.