



## ***Church of Ireland United Dioceses of Dublin & Glendalough***

**Church of Ireland House  
Church Avenue  
Rathmines  
Dublin 6**

***The Most Reverend Dr Michael Jackson  
Archbishop of Dublin and Bishop of Glendalough  
Primate of Ireland and Metropolitan***

*Tel: 00353 1 4125663  
[archbishop@dublin.anglican.org](mailto:archbishop@dublin.anglican.org)*

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To those sitting State Examinations, to teachers and to all staff members

Once again, a school year comes to a close and once again State Examinations begin. For two years in succession, those in your school who have been preparing for such examinations have had no option but to look in many directions at the same time. And your teachers and other staff members have had no option but to do the same in advising you and in helping you to cover your subjects. This means, regrettably, that the most immediate memories you will have of school as an activity, as a community, as a place to find your feet and to flourish in new and challenging ways will have been framed, in both 2020 and 2021, by what we now have no option but to call a hybrid existence. It is indeed a strange way to describe what we once called school.

Some of us see school as something simply to get on with. We are self-motivated. We enjoy independence. Guidance, more than instruction, is what we need and the thing to which we best respond. Others of us need more immediate help to get going and to keep going. I still have vivid memories of what it is to 'get stuck.' And they are not pleasant! Lockdown has forced us into a zone of isolation that we had never expected, for which we would never have wished and with which we have had to deal as best we can as we also continue to deal with everything else around us. For some of us, being with our family members all day for months on end has been difficult. For others, it has been a comfort, a strength and an encouragement. All of this is what the coronavirus has done to us. While it seems that in Ireland those hard and long months now are a receding memory, in the rest of the world COVID-19 is still very virulent and a danger to everyone, crouching and ready to pounce. The most needy in our societies always go to the wall and the coronavirus has taught us this all over again.

But now is not the time to dwell on analysis. Now is the time to congratulate you, all together and individually, on the completion of your school career. You have done everything asked of you. You have risen to the challenges. You will have done more than you would have thought possible in the early days of March 2020. And for all of this you deserve the applause of everyone who knows you. You yourself know what you have put into this – late nights, early mornings, pushing yourself when you wanted to be somewhere else, helping others who had 'got stuck,' learning to swallow your pride and

ask for help. All of this taken together is a significant achievement and you ought, every one of you, to feel proud of yourself. Others already feel proud of you and will have told you this.

You will now leave school – and I hope with happy memories. You will now continue to make your own individual contribution, to learn, to teach others a wide range of things that you will be able to own and to share. You will do this wherever you find yourself in successive jobs, positions and careers. Many of these opportunities for work will be new and have not yet even been shaped. But they are waiting for you. The whole school population will have helped you towards the future, your fellow-pupils, your principal and teachers, all staff members. You and your school are to be congratulated on this in every way.

Whether you have opted for predicted grades or for what I still call ‘the exams’ or for a combination of both, you deserve to congratulate yourselves on reaching this point of real achievement. I wish you everything that is best in this exam period. Simply do your best. Simply keep going. What begins simply has to finish. And: Good luck!

Yours sincerely,

+Michael