

# Castle Chronicle Christmas 2020



It has been a very different year. Despite that we succeeded in creating a happy and fulfilling life together here in the Castle. Many of the values which are associated with Christmas are very much evident in Castle

life throughout the year. You are all familiar with our 4 core Values: Be There, Be Caring, Be Truthful and Be Grateful. I would like to reflect on the real meaning of the principle of 'Be There' and how it has been of considerable value during this pandemic and how it connects to the Christmas season.

'Being There' is usually explained to the boys as being where you are supposed to be, either in class, at training, at rehearsal and so on. However, I suggest it has a much deeper meaning than that. Surely it also means *be there* in the moment, to be present. *Be there* when you are talking to someone and really give them your full attention. *Be there* when you are studying, not drifting off to some other mental space. *Be there* when you are in our beautiful chapel at Mass, trying to connect your thoughts and your soul with the presence of Jesus. Park your troubles, worries and concerns at the back of the Chapel and absorb the incredible messages that a child was born 2020 years ago, who altered our understanding of what it means to be human. Forever. He has promised that he will always 'Be There' for us.

These meanings of 'Be There' are very relevant to living and growing up in a boarding community. At a recent conference I attended, one of the speakers said that boarding is a "very powerful form of education". It goes way beyond academics and is a truly holistic experience. As a community of parents and professional educators we have an opportunity to influence for the better the values and beliefs of boys at a very impressionable age. During a recent interview with an overseas applicant a parent paid Blackrock potentially the greatest compliment I have ever heard. When I asked her why she wanted her son to come here, she immediately said "Because I have been told by friends in Ireland that you produce kind and caring men, with strong values". *Being There* is one of those values.

I thank you all who have contributed to this special community over the past few months. The Parents, Housemasters, Chaplain, Care-coordinator, and Nurses, who are 'There' for the boys on a daily basis. We also thank our support staff, who work tirelessly on our behalf. And finally, to our exceptional College management, who never falter in their support of the Castle. Nollaig Shona Dhaoibh Go Léir!!

Mr. Niall MacDermott – Director of Boarding

## Message from Chairperson of Castle Council

In my six years at Blackrock College and in The Castle, never did I think we would have to deal with circumstances as serious and daunting as a global pandemic. That said, I am proud to say that the comments I have received from all the year groups have been resoundingly positive. Despite living in a time of restricted movements, each boarder, new and returning, have immediately enjoyed a strong sense of Castle spirit.

The stress from Covid-19 has thankfully not had a major impact on the boys doing their Leaving and Junior Certificates. This is largely down to the excellent study routine that has long since been established in the Castle.

The Housemasters have been welcoming and facilitating in the daily life of the Castle. They create an environment for each of us to fulfil our potential and transform the Castle into a home. For this we thank them.

Mr. MacDermott has done an excellent job making Castle life a positive experience, ensuring the safety of us all through what are unprecedented times. We wish Mr. Mealiffe well in his new role as the Assistant Director of the Castle. We miss Andrea Fitzgerald and Toirleac O'Brien, who have left the Castle after lengthy service. We wish them the very best in their retirement.

Overall, the first term has well exceeded my expectations, and I hope the next term will be even better. Happy holidays!

Seamus Ennis  
Chairperson of the Castle Council.



Connor Tonge (4th Year) and Niall Smyth (3rd Year) at the Chapter Tag Rugby Competition.



Fionn Dougan (6th Year) making a pass at the Senior Chapter Tag Rugby competition.



Fiahra Coakley (2nd Year) Kieran Byrne (1st Year)

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William Connellan (4th Year) joins in the Bubble Football Tournament, raising funds for St.Vincent DePaul



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Richie Li (1st Year) putting decorations on the Castle Christmas tree.

## Christmas Dinner in the Castle!

### Andrea Fitzgerald

The Castle Community was disappointed to hear of the retirement of Andrea Fitzgerald in September 2020.

Andrea started in the Castle in 2009. She initially worked as a Nurse and then became more involved in the general care of the boarders as Care Co-Ordinator. In addition, her 2 sons, Luke and Aaron, were boarders so she developed a unique view of the Castle. She also ran the College Golf team and contributed to the medical care of the staff of the College. As one can see, Andrea is a bundle of energy.



She became an extremely popular figure with staff and students, establishing herself as a pillar in the community. Andrea dedicated herself tirelessly to the care of others, not only spending endless hours tending to illnesses and injuries but also caring for the Castle community, decorating the Castle at Halloween and Christmas, organising parents' events and bringing good humor to everything she undertook. She was a multi-tasker par extraordinaire. She, in essence, embodied our core values of Being There and Being Caring.

Truthfully, the value of Andrea's contribution to life in Blackrock College can never be overstated. Everything she did, she did well and with a smile, which could light up a room. We will always fondly remember the way she made each boy in her care feel special.

Andrea Fitzgerald brought a strong female presence to the Castle. She was, and always will be, loved by those who were fortunate enough to know her. We wish herself and her husband Des much happiness in their joint retirement.



3rd Years enjoying the Christmas dinner



Ethan Connor and Geoffrey Lande (6th Year) enjoy the festivities.

## 6th Years take on the Housemasters in a game of Tag Rugby.



6th Year Tag Rugby Team



Mr. Mealiffe scoring a try for the housemasters!



Iain McLaughlin (4th Year) playing resistance basketball



Mark Doyle (6th Year Captain) presenting Mr Mealiffe with the trophy.



6th Yrs. and Housemasters enjoy a moment after the final whistle. Friends again !