Mount Lilydale Mercy College welcomes Mr Philip Morison

Below are excerpts of an interview with Mr Morison as he prepares to take up the role of Principal of Mount Lilydale Mercy College.

What attracted you to Mount Lilydale Mercy College?
Essentially I believed that I was ready for a change and I wanted to come back to Melbourne where most of my family reside. I knew a lot about Mount Lilydale Mercy College because of my friendship with Bernard, my friendship with Beth Calthorpe and I had watched it grow over a long period of time. As a child I often visited an uncle who lived in Clarke Street (and still does) and so I knew much of the history going back to the 60’s when it was still a girl’s College. Whilst at St Joseph’s Ferntree Gully, I travelled here for EISM competitions in both football and soccer. As a member of the Mercy Network of schools I have visited Mount Lilydale quite a few times over the years. I have always been impressed by the College but in particular by the hospitality. I was looking for a school that was more than a school. I was looking for a community and I believe Mount Lilydale to be just that. To me Mount Lilydale Mercy College services a wide range of both suburban and rural areas just like a country school in a town like Warrnambool. I look forward to immersing myself in the Mount Lilydale culture and vision.

The facilities also helped as did the vineyard and the location. Having previously lived in Selby and Upwey I am looking forward to returning to the Yarra Ranges.

What are you passionate about?
Education and inspiring every child to aspire.
We must help every child to understand that they are special, unique and talented and have much to offer. The world will and must be a better place because of the contribution that they will make. I always enjoyed listening to Bishop Joe Grech who used to tell students that God does not make rubbish. What a wonderful message.

Who inspires you?
This too is not an easy answer as I have been inspired by many people along the way.

Brother Matt Miller was my Principal as a child. The Salesian Priest who employed me and was my first Principal, whom I will not name. Fr Bill Edwards, who was a Rector at St Joseph’s Ferntree Gully. My Parish Priest as a child, Fr Kevin Toomey and my current Parish Priest Fr Lawrence O’Toole. I find many of the speeches of JFK inspiring along with the words of Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela. Many of the teachers who work so hard inspire me. Then there is Sir Roden Cutler - Victoria Cross winner, Catherine McAuley and the sisters who left their homes in Ireland to come to Australia to start our schools. Young people inspire me. They are so full of spirit and you gain energy from being around them.

What does your faith mean to you?
To put it quite simply I loved growing up Catholic and I still love being a Catholic. Ours is a faith that is full of hope and our message is a positive one. Jesus models for us a way to live and we cannot love God unless we love each other. To me it is very simple. Whenever I am thinking about issues that trouble me or when I am wanting to apply policy, I look to the College Vision and Mission Statements and then ask a very simple question: “What would Jesus do?”

We talk about Faith, Hope and Love, but the greatest of these is love.
How often have we heard it and how often do I fail to live it? We belong to a tradition with scripture and ritual and these are very important. They help us to find God in each other. We talk of the human face of God.

Graduating with a Bachelor of Science from Monash University, Philip Morison began his post-university working life as an Industrial Chemist. Motivated by the desire to make a difference, he moved into the education arena after discovering how inspiring he found the teaching aspects of his work. After completing a Diploma of Education, Philip took up a position at St Joseph’s in Ferntree Gully in 1986 where he held a number of positions of responsibility including: Maths Coordinator, Middle School Coordinator, Senior School Coordinator and Timetabler. In 1998 Philip took on the role of Deputy Principal at St Pauls College in Altona North and then moved into a Deputy Principalship at Whitefriars College in Donvale.

“My aim is to encourage our students to develop to their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community. This is a philosophy that reflects the traditions of Catholic education.”

Bachelor of Science - Monash University
Diploma of Education - Bendigo College of Advanced Education (Methods - Maths and Chemistry)
Graduate Certificate of Social Science (Student Guidance and Welfare)
Master of Education - Australian Catholic University
Diploma of Theology - Catholic Pastoral Formation Centre
Graduate Certificate in Catholic Studies - Australian Catholic University
**What led you to a career in education?**

This is a long story! During my science degree I took a year off and besides doing many hours in the Army Reserve, I worked as a trainee scientist in a rubber company. This same company then re-employed me as a Quality and Process Controller upon my graduation. Within that year I was promoted to Production Chemist and then I was running the laboratory. The company was small and it kept being bought out, so times were tense. During these times I enjoyed teaching the largely uneducated factory workers about production processes and they in turn taught me about how the processes actually worked on the factory floor. It always worried me that many of them could not read and they always used to ask me to read them their pay slips and tell them how much they were being paid. I had to design process cards with diagrams as they could not read simple production instructions.

This once again reaffirmed for me that education was life-giving and I wanted to be more involved in it, so I left the job and decided to do a Diploma of Education.

I started teaching at St Joseph’s College in Ferntree Gully, which provided me with many opportunities. Whilst there I studied part time to complete: a Graduate Certificate of Social Science in Student Guidance and Welfare, a Masters in Education and a Diploma of Theology. I taught there for about twelve years and had many roles: Mathematics Coordinator, Middle School Coordinator, Senior School and VCE Coordinator, Timetabler and Daily Organiser. I left there to become a Deputy Principal at St Paul’s College in Altona North, then Deputy Principal at Whitefriars in Donvale and in 2003 I became the Principal at Emmanuel College Warrnambool.

I have loved every school that I have worked at and although the students have all been very different, I find working with them quite revivalsing.  

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**I believe that through education we can really make a difference in our world.**

**What do you love about your work?**

There are so many things that I love about the daily life that I have been blessed to enjoy. Each day I awake to travel to a place that I love. I get to work with like-minded people in a role that is constantly changing and growing. We will never get bored working in a school.

I think that we are privileged to work with young people and parents entrust to us a most precious gift, the education of their children. We must always remember that each and every child is loved and we in turn must love them.

We can help young people find their passions and develop their talents not for selfish reasons, but so that they can serve others. What a huge difference we can make.

**Each day we are the difference in the classroom. We can inspire our students or we can bore them. We can help them grow or we can hinder their growth. We can develop the whole person or we develop narrow minded students.**

What a great calling we have.

**What have been your proudest achievements in your career/life?**

This is probably the hardest question thus far because there is so much about which I am proud: the 22 years of marriage to my wife and my fantastic four children, watching my son graduate last month, the birth of my four children, walking down the street and meeting people that I have taught. They stop and chat. I love to hear about the things that they are doing and how they are going about fulfilling their dreams.

I have loved walking around Emmanuel College and seeing the growth both in facilities, the size of the school and the academic standards. I am proud to be the person to follow in the steps of Bernard Dobson, as I have known and admired him for a long time. There is so much about which we can all be proud.

**What do you like best about today’s young people?**

As I said before, young people are full of energy and are life-giving. I love to be around them and I feel honoured to work with them every day. They are the future and I am lucky enough to be a part of that.

I really enjoy it when the roles are reversed and I learn from them and the more often it happens the better. What a privilege.

**Can you tell us about growing up in your family?**

I think I grew up in a normal Catholic family of the 60s and 70’s in a suburb of Melbourne. In fact, as I look back on it was a great childhood and I have much to be thankful for. I grew up the second of four boys with my Mum and Dad in a small suburban house in Clayton. Mum stayed at home to look after us kids and Dad was a fitter and turner for the railways. He worked at Newport and Jolimont, but when I was in Year 10 he travelled to Bendigo every week as the foreman of the Turnery at the workshop. My dad drove Taxis on weekends to help pay the bills and although by today’s standards we did not have much, I think we rarely missed out on anything. Clayton was a great place to grow up. There were still lots of market gardens and small farms and we rode our bikes everywhere.

I attended St Peter’s Primary school Clayton which was run by the Brigidine Sisters and then accepted a scholarship to CBC St Kilda which was a Christian Brother School. After Secondary school I started a Bachelor of Science Degree at Monash.

Family life is hugely important to me and I could not imagine life without my family. I am married to Jenny who also happens to be a teacher. We also have four beautiful children all of whom attend Emmanuel College with us. James has just finished Year 12 and currently awaits his results and university offers; Patrick has just finished Year 11 and will start a very busy Year 12 doing Methods, Specialist, Physics and Chemistry as well as English of course. Benjamin has just finished Year 9 and is looking forward to a Japanese trip next year and our only daughter Bethany has just finished Year 7.

Education is important in our family. Our parents taught us that education is the best way to secure a good job and I still believe that is the case today.