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Dear Students and Staff of the IJ Family,

The new term begins with a sense of hope.

Last year, we celebrated with gratitude our 165th Anniversary on Founder's Day with the IJ Family of 18,000 persons at the National Stadium. This year, Founder's Day will be celebrated very differently during this Coronavirus Pandemic.

Just within a year, life has changed so much and we do not know what the future holds, but one thing we are sure of is that each of us is created by our Creator who truly loves us and is there to give us hope as we face the challenges of life.

Our founder, Blessed Nicolas Barre, like us today, also lived in difficult and trying times in 17th Century France where the after-effects of war left the country with marked poverty, and the disadvantaged, especially girls and women, suffered much.

There were three things Father Nicolas Barre did:

- He prayed, he spent time with God whom he knew truly loves each person He has created.
- He reached out to those who were disadvantaged.
- He contacted people who were open and willing to form a community to work for and with the disadvantaged, especially girls and women.

As we celebrate Founder's Day during this Pandemic, let us also take time to:

- pray and reflect on what is important in our lives, what gives us meaning and purpose in life, what gives us direction and what is our spiritual anchor.
- value the significant persons in our lives, our parents, families, teachers and friends.
- reach out with compassion and generosity to those who are disadvantaged in any way and do an act of kindness and mercy for them in our own way each day.

In more concrete ways during this Pandemic, I would like to invite us to look deep within ourselves and ask:

- With the Circuit Breaker and having to stay at home, are we becoming more grateful to people whom we may have taken for granted?
- In our social distancing, are we realising a deep longing for community we did not fully notice as we strived too much for our needs and our independence?
- With a virus that can jump so easily from person to person, are we more aware of how interconnected we are, no matter who we are or where we live?
- On our walks outside, are we seeing and appreciating the glorious gifts of nature that have been begging for our attention?
- With more time on our own, are we each setting a time apart, to listen to the inner voice of love within our hearts?

I would like to leave you with two quotations from Nicolas Barre, which I hope will continue to give you the spiritual anchor amidst any storm you may face in life:

“Believe God truly loves you” and
“Whatever happens, be always at peace and trust in God.”
In God we place our hope, a hope that will not disappoint.

And a special blessing as you begin each new day!

*May you experience each day as a sacred gift
woven around the heart of wonder.*

*May you appreciate the abundant gifts you have -
your health, eyes to behold the world,
your thoughts to countenance the unknown,
your memory to harvest vanished days,
your heart to feel the world's waves,
your breath to breathe the nourishment
of distance made intimate by earth.*

*May you take time to see the quiet miracles that seek no attention,
Keep something beautiful in your heart
to survive difficult times and enjoy good times.*

*May dawn find you awake and alert,
approaching your new day with dreams, possibilities and promises;*

*May evening find you gracious and fulfilled;
May you go into the night blessed, sheltered and protected;
May your soul calm, console and renew you.*

*May you live this day
compassionate of heart,
clear in word,
gracious in awareness,
courageous in thought,
generous in love.*

- adapted from John O'Donohue

Happy Founder's Day!

Let's celebrate the gift of one another in the IJ Community.

United in love and prayer.



Sr Maria Lau
Provincial, IJ Sisters