



# VIEW FROM THE CHALK FACE

Lent 2021  
Week 9 (w/c 8 March)

## Perserverando

## Conanti Dabatur

These mottos are deeply engrained in the psyche of the school. Despite having different origins, the two mottos speak of a natural synergy and congruence. Starting with 'through effort we succeed' and onto perseverance, the thread runs naturally from two to eighteen. The times in which we are living, such mottos, such plinths on which to stand, seem apt, both as a base from which to spring, but also a dynamic friend. They speak of characteristics that all in our community have shown in recent months. These notions and motifs are seen through artefacts across both sites; the Prep School song celebrates Conanti Dabatur and the recently created pupil newspaper, Perserverando Post, views the issues of today and current achievements, through the prism of our heritage.

Our return to the school sites this week has been such a joy. The buildings and grounds, so long lying dormant, with a veneer of melancholy, are now bursting with life. The emotional and educational transition is upon us, as well as the logistical; putting on the uniform, tying hair up; more order and structure. We will all need the traits our mottos speak of as we adjust - perseverance and effort will lead to success, in whatever guise we choose this to be.

Perseverance has been seen recently with the same named space vehicle landing on Mars. On the 18th February the Perseverance Rover was lowered onto the surface of the red planet. Its mission is to search for signs of ancient microbial life, which will advance NASA's quest to explore the past habitability of Mars. The rover has a drill to collect core samples of Martian rock and soil, then store them in sealed tubes for pickup by a future mission that would ferry them back to Earth for detailed analysis. Perseverance will also test technologies to help pave the way for future human exploration of Mars. I am sure many of you have viewed the video clips of either the landing, or the footage from the surface. The Martian tourist board need to raise their game to attract visitors, as it looks a bit bleak and barren, but it's a start!

There are several ways that the mission helps pave the way for future human expeditions to Mars and demonstrates technologies that may be used in those endeavours. These include testing a method for producing oxygen from the Martian atmosphere, identifying other resources (such as subsurface water), improving landing techniques, and characterizing weather, dust, and other potential environmental conditions that could affect future astronauts living and working on Mars. Just like the amazing scientific 'miracle' that has led to a Covid vaccine in record time, the Perseverance Rover shows the result of ingenuity and creativity when a group of people are committed, work together, and are focused on a common goal. The team that have made this happen also had to cope with working from home and the barriers that this can present. They have proved that whatever obstacles are put in our way, we can overcome and triumph if we do not let adversity put us off course. We have the choice to allow barriers to thwart us, or not.

In the midst of a global pandemic, you may think it strange that there has been such an expensive and seemingly irrelevant enterprise. Why, when 500,000 Americans have died of Covid, will NASA be spending \$2.7 billion on this project?



Why, when we haven't explored the entire sea floor of our own planet, do we try to explore another? Many reasons I think. The need for us to be constantly pushing our margins and the concept of what we view as our limits. Those mountain climbers who do it, 'because it is there,' have an insatiable desire to tread where few have before. There is also the romantic aspiration of looking to the stars and wondering what is out there. The Ancient Greeks were fascinated by their environment and created gods to explain why phenomena occurred; I am sure many of you have read Stephen Fry's 'Mythos.' The natural, inquisitive trait of humans to wonder, 'are we alone,' and for us to explore the wider reaches of our galaxy and universe, has always been there. The majesty and enormity of space. The final frontier?

It also speaks to us today. The message of progress - if we aren't moving forward, we are still, stagnating and regressing. It gives us the important lesson of keeping our eyes up, aspirationally looking beyond our bubbles, our borders and experiences. It is easy to look inwards and retreat in the cocoon of familiarity and comfort. They have their place of course, but we need and must look up and out. This is true literally - world travel space exploration - and metaphorically - positively engaging with different cultures, religions and viewpoints.

The late, great, Professor Stephen Hawking said, 'I don't think the human race will survive the next thousand years, unless we spread into space. There are too many accidents that can befall life on a single planet. But I'm an optimist. We will reach out to the stars.' We can contextualise what 'the stars' can mean for us; not necessarily, but possibly, a literal interpretation of different planets, but a goal or aim for us to strive for. As we all look forward to the sunshine, and seeing friends and family again, so we must tilt our eyes upwards and see what we can do to make our dreams become reality. We will succeed through our effort and perseverance.

Best wishes,



Jon Perriss  
Headmaster