Holiday Program Talk
December 20, 2013

Dona Nobis Pacem. Give us peace. Pacem in terris. Peace on earth. Latin to English, English to Latin, similar to the experience of Browning boys in Forms I through III, who speak Latin in lively sessions daily in class. To prepare, their teacher creates short Vimeo (YouTube like) videos, made on iMovie. He reads expressively, with Latin subtitles at the bottom of the screen, and adds pictures which illustrate the meaning. What a difference from the experience of these boys' parents and grandparents, who studied the so called dead language, never realizing it could be spoken, and enjoyed as well.

The phrase Dona nobis pacem, give us peace, is also used in the Catholic mass. Google also prompts me to remember it is the final movement of Bach's Mass in B minor, the climax of Leonard Bernstein's Mass, and the high point of Bobby Darin's 1960 Christmas album. Who knew?

The theme of peace pervades this year's holiday program: in word, in song, in musical composition, and even in dance. Give us peace. I like to think our program cover promotes peace too, and I suggest you read the notes contained inside. The art reminds me of the statue in Rockefeller Center of Atlas, holding the globe on his back. The painting reflects the work of artist Keith Harring, himself a provocative AIDS activist, who advocated peaceful and safe ways of living together. We need to work together to make peace.

At this point I want to thank the rabbis and staff of Temple Emanu-el for permitting the Browning community again to use this wonderful sanctuary. I want to thank all of you for being here at the one occasion when the entire Browning community is under one roof: boys, parents, teachers/speakers, singers, performers. And finally, huge acknowledgements to Lucy Warner and David Prestigiacomo for their tireless efforts, which began in some cases in early September, to create this event. Thank you.

For just a minute I want to return to our theme of peace, of peace on earth. I wonder if any of you were as moved as I was by last week's powerful five part series in the *New York Times* by Andrea Elliot on homeless children in New York. Dasani, an 11 year old girl whose last name was not released, has spent most of her life in temporary housing for homeless families. Here is one overwhelming statistic about homeless children right here in New York City, arguably the richest city on earth. There are more than 22,000 of them. Elliot helps us visualize that number. "If all of the city's homeless children were to file into Madison Square Garden for a hockey game, more than 4,800 would not have a seat." Peace on earth, here in New York City? Hardly. And yet, Elliot explains, the saving grace for Dasani is her daily experience in school: she forgets her worries, looks well groomed and not homeless, and encounters some excellent teachers. IS 265 in Brooklyn. Peace on earth?

Now let's think for a minute how fortunate we all are to have Browning in our lives. I am very optimistic about the future of every one of our boys. Pre primary boys work with their 4th grade big brothers. Older boys work with, or are, Peer Tutors. We have Book Brothers and Guys Who Read and Key Society helpers, as well as Peer Leaders and Team captains. Browning is abuzz with teamwork. Pacem in terris/peace on earth.

A final note. We are a school known for our classics—Latin and Greek—as well as our STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. We have artists and writers and test takers. Increasingly our boys are drawn to science and engineering, and last year 8 of our boys—one quarter of Form VI—entered engineering programs in universities and liberal arts colleges. Technology is embedded into the core of the curriculum; ask our 6th grade boys about their Makerbot projects as they design toys for their first grade buddies. And check out Browning's website where our school is featured in a national piece about technology in education. Browning at the forefront/leaders of the future/Dona Nobis Pacem/Give us peace.

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