



ANNUAL SPEECH DAY AND DISTRIBUTION OF PRIZES #66  
FRIDAY, 4 NOVEMBER 2016

FR ROBERT J DAVOREN SJ – RECTOR  
SPEECH DAY ADDRESS

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Chair of Council - Fr Paul Mullins, Guest of Honour- Dr Suzanne Le Mire, special guests, staff, students and members of the College family.

I especially welcome our Year 3 students and others who have commenced at the College this year who are attending their first speech day, as well as our Year 12 students who are attending their final speech day before graduating from the College.

On a foggy, steel gray day in September 2002, Dr Bennet Omalu arrived at the County coroner's office in Pittsburg Pennsylvania. His task was to perform an autopsy on the body of Mike Webster, a professional football player. Dr Omalu did not have an appreciation for American football since he was born in the jungles of Biafra during a Nigerian air raid, nor did he know how famous was his subject for autopsy. Mike Webster- a Pittsburg Steelers, 4 Superbowl victories, 245 games, and Hall of Famer, yet Webster had finished up "homeless, unemployed, deep in debt, in the care of a psychiatrist and on medication".

Omalu's challenge was to explain how this big athletic man ended up so mentally unbalanced. Could Mike Webster's paranoia, explosive behavior and loss of memory be caused by repeated blows to the head?

When examining Webster's brain, Dr Omalu found no visible unusual signs, and CT and MRI suggested a normal brain. But he was convinced there was an explanation for Mike Webster's untimely death and was determined to find out. He sought permission from the chief pathologist to run special tests, a microscopic analysis of the brain tissue. A deeply religious man, Omalu regarded his boss's permission as a kind of blessing.

Days and nights went by. Weekends. Slicing, staining, ordering slides. He was ordering so many slides, he had to start paying for this out of his own pocket. Eventually he made a discovery. Omalu showed the slides to his boss and to scientists at the University of Pittsburgh. Everyone agreed: this was a disease, or a form of it, that no-one had ever seen before. Omalu wondered what to call it. He wanted a good acronym. Eventually, they came up with CTE, Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy.

He published his findings. The news of CTE, and of retired athletes possibly suffering debilitating brain damage, was now hitting the mainstream press. The NFL (National Football League) responded with denial and attack against the young pathologist in Pittsburgh, who surely had no idea what he was talking about. "Preposterous," they said to reporters. "It's not appropriate science." "Purely speculative."



“ If you want to be of use to others, begin by taking pains with yourself: the fire that is to enkindle others should be lighted at home. ”

- Ignatius of Loyola

Omalu was learning something very ugly about how an \$8 billion industry could attempt to silence even the most well-intentioned scientist. He was becoming afraid. Friends were warning him. "You are challenging one of the most powerful organizations in the world. There may be other things going on that you're not aware of. Be careful!" But Omalu did not become angry or give up. He reminded himself of who he was. "I perform autopsies on dead people every day, so every day I'm reminded of my mortality. It has made me become very religious. I know I'm going to die someday, I know I'm going to be judged by God, and I have work to do while I am here on the earth."

The story of Dr Omalu has been made into a film, 'Concussion', starring Will Smith. The NFL eventually admitted that CTE was a disease which they needed to deal with. Over time, Dr Omalu found CTE in the brains of 76 out of 79 former players. While many of us may not have heard of Dr Omalu, few can say they are not aware of various sports which now have concussion policies based in part, on his work and the discovery of Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy.

Last week Cricket Australia's new rules regarding concussion substitutes were implemented for the very first time after NSW batsman, Daniel Hughes, was struck on the helmet while batting against Victoria.

I find Dr Omalu's story inspiring since it tells how a committed individual can have the courage to speak the truth however unpopular, despite opposition and vilification from a massively powerful organisation such as the NFL. Our Australian football codes were similar. Many had the idea of toughing it out, "players should just get over it, get on with it". In other words, get back on the field as soon as possible. This was the traditional thinking of the time. It is also an example of how one's religious faith can impel and sustain us during difficult times. Dr Omalu's Catholic faith was important to him and his vision was long term, "I know I'm going to be judged by God, and I have work to do while I am here on the earth".

Many traditions are useful and survive the test of time. As a Jesuit College, we are blessed to share the rich history of Jesuit tradition which has developed over centuries. It is timely today to affirm our place within the wider network of Jesuit ministries. Our links to the Jesuit parish at Norwood is evident with the presence of Fr Mullins with us on stage. He is both parish priest and Chair of our College Council and I thank him for his considerable contribution to the College in addition to his extensive parish responsibilities. On Saturday 19 November 2016 we celebrate another milestone at Sevenhill, that of the 150th anniversary of the Consecration of the Sanctuary of St Aloysius Church, Sevenhill.

Another major event this year for the Jesuit Order has been the election of a new Superior General in Rome, Fr Arturo Sosa. He is only the 30th Superior General in the 475-year history of the Society of Jesus and the first General from South America. Following his election, the Jesuit Congregation has continued and a number of matters regarding the governance and challenges to the Jesuit Order will be discussed. One issue is the falling number of Jesuits in the western world, including Australia. As fewer Jesuits are available for mission, greater importance is placed on the role of lay people who share and promote the Ignatian Ethos.

I wish to acknowledge the efforts of those who promote Ignatian Ethos within the College. Our Directors of Ethos, Mrs Marie Hogan and Mrs Jacquie McCabe, together with others of our Ethos committee, have conducted Ignis programs, Sevenhill retreats and directed our annual staff Ignatian Day each May. This work is vital to enable staff to gain a sound grasp of Ignatian spirituality and educational principles and so make the College genuinely Jesuit in nature.

Our Annual Prize-giving and Speech Day is a significant tradition at Ignatius. There has been one every year since 1951 when the College commenced at Norwood - an unbroken series of sixty-six

such events. A grand occasion, where so many from the College gather and can feel very proud of who we are and what we do.

There was a time when some schools abandoned Prize-giving ceremonies because “it didn’t seem fair that not everyone could get a prize”. Our faithfulness with this tradition is in part a reflection of our Jesuit tradition which promotes academic excellence. No judgement is made on those who do not appear as prize winners and we recognize many students who work extremely hard, yet fail to walk this stage. Our tradition of Ignatian excellence challenges each of us to do the very best we can, with the particular gifts we possess. Good teachers and mentors can lead us well beyond what we have come to believe are our limits.

I welcome the many parents and grandparents who are with us today. We greatly value your trust in placing the education of your children in our hands and we acknowledge that we work with you, who are the first and best educators of your children. To those present whose family have donated prizes I thank you for your generosity and foresight.

I would like to acknowledge staff members who finish their time at the College after many years of faithful service.

Mrs Christine Cummins has recently completed fourteen years’ service as Library Assistant at the Junior School. She has been an active contributor to all aspects of school life and was a member of a number of staff committees, including Ignatian Ethos.

Dr Des Joyce commenced in 2004 as teacher of Science and Mathematics and was Head of Science Senior Years for four years. He participated in a number of Immersions and was Director of the Caroline Chisholm Program from 2014 to 2016. Dr Joyce has been a loyal supporter of the Kairos program and will soon attend his fourteenth retreat.

Mrs Jacinta Calman also commenced in 2004 and taught Reception until this year. Her colleagues describe her as incredibly organized and a dedicated professional. She was most caring of the children in her classes and thoughtful towards fellow staff members.

The College has been blessed by the presence of these staff members during their years of service.

On a sadder note, we recall the death of Mrs Nathalie McRae, the manager of the Senior School Tuckshop for twenty-one years. Nathalie died on 23rd May this year after post-operative complications. Almost all in our community encountered Mrs McRae in one way or another through her great generosity and involvement in the life of the school over so many years. In the week prior to her death she was involved in ‘Generations in Jazz’ in Mount Gambier. Staff and students told of her kindness and were very sad at her passing.

Three significant anniversaries occur this year. It has been twenty years since we relocated Year Seven to the senior campus, since we added Reception, Year One and Year Two classes, and thirdly, twenty years since we extended co-education to every year of the College. Girls had been accepted into Years 11 and 12 since 1971 but from 1996, they were welcomed into every year level of the College. What a wonderful change this has been!

Females have achieved in every area of school life and many old scholars have shone in post-school areas. Yen Pham (Class of 2010) was announced as our first female Rhodes Scholar. Our guest of honor, Dr Le Mire, (Class of 1983), has achieved much professionally and as a wife and mother.

To celebrate the twenty year anniversary, a women’s breakfast was held last August which was addressed by old scholar, Mrs Elaine Bensted (Class of 1980). Elaine is Chief Executive of Zoos SA

and is responsible for the management of Adelaide Zoo, Monarto Zoo and Warrawong Sanctuary. Her description of her time at the College and her present work was nothing short of inspiring.

We have significantly increased the number of female students at Saint Ignatius' College over the last twenty years and this has had very positive impacts on both the boys and girls, thereby vindicating that significant decision twenty years ago to become a fully integrated co-educational school. It remains my hope that more women can be included in the leadership structure of the College, indeed one day, that we may have a female Principal.

The ongoing high standard of academic results is a reflection of students' hard work and also the wise instruction of their teachers. As well as final year instructors, teachers in the Junior School have also formed sound academic foundations for future success. Junior School teachers present today taught many of you who are in the Year 12 cohort when you were 'little' and they continue to take an interest in you and will pray for you during examinations.

While the College is successful academically, and provides a traditional education, we must ensure that we adapt to new needs and opportunities. Some educational scholars have identified a "global achievement gap" which is the leap between what even our best schools are teaching, and the must-have skills of the future. Such skills include critical thinking and problem-solving, collaboration across networks and effective oral and written communication skills.

I have had opportunities, along with other members of College staff to investigate the nature of the "21<sup>st</sup> Century learner" in order to understand how best to motivate, teach and inspire them. I am very confident that we can successfully adapt teaching, learning, and assessment in the College and build upon our existing sound traditions.

One response to this adaptation is to be found on the top floor of our new Student and Staff Services building, which is to be named the Caroline Chisholm Building. This has been designed to enhance the flexible learning style which enables problem-centred learning, collaboration, enhanced technology use, and 'maker space' activities. A number of Heads of Faculty are working to adapt curriculum to make the most of our flexible learning space which at various times, will be available for use by all year levels. Already innovative activities and STEM projects are taking place with our Virtual Reality, Robotics, 3D printer equipment and laser cutter. I feel confident that this new area will help promote *creativity, adaptability, curiosity and imagination* in our students and that the flexible learning space will feature high on their 'must visit' list.

The new building will provide the opportunity to reposition the Christus statue which was originally on the curved wall of the old Bellarmine Building. It will have a prominent position overlooking the Bourke Oval. The statue is a generous donation of the Warhurst family.

It is helpful at times to reflect upon why Jesuit schools exist and on our role in this community. The answer goes back to Saint Ignatius himself, and his desire to 'help souls', in other words to help people becomes fully alive through discovering they are precious in god's eye's. In so doing, they flourish and in turn, seek to help others.

We searched for a patron for our new building who embodied these principles. The young woman, Caroline Chisholm, who labored in colonial Sydney, is an appropriate choice. While Caroline's work as a social reformer is widely acknowledged, what is less well known is that her work was motivated by a strong sense of vocation born out of a desire to do God's will. Caroline Chisholm's achievements were extraordinary for a woman of her time. She was an advocate for women, awakening the colony's conscience to the lack of dignity with which many female immigrants were treated. Her life and example speaks to women today as strongly as in her own lifetime.

I wish to acknowledge our students, for their faithfulness to their studies and their co-curricular activities, and for their willingness to support the values of the College. This includes cheerfully pulling up socks and doing up top buttons when requested but more importantly, for maintaining a high standard of dress when staff are *not* present. We see what you do and are proud. Many of the older students will go to the city or Norwood Parade today so keep up the standard. We do get many compliments about the good behaviour and neat uniform of Ignatius students.

And turning to our Class of 2016. I wish to thank Lilli Vagnarelli and Tim Gregory, our student Captains, and also Brittany Calvert and Tessa Hogan, Vice-captains for Liturgy and Social Justice, respectively. Together with the Captains of Music and Drama, House Captains and other appointed leaders, you have displayed great energy and imagination as you led the younger students, especially at our Athletics and Swimming Carnivals, Liturgies and Assemblies.

Don't underestimate the power of your everyday kindness and friendliness as you model *how* an Ignatian relates to others. What you have modelled will be taken up by your successors in years to come. As you prepare to pass the baton of service to those following, I suspect you must wonder where the last year has gone. Can you recall receiving your commission twelve months ago?

And to all our Year 12 cohort, who have been formed with Ignatian traditions, while you are leaving the College, and stepping into the adult world, you take with you the marks of these traditions which will serve you well.

Many of you were present at a Rector's Assembly when I spoke of the man called the 'hero of the Hudson'. US Airways pilot, Captain Chesley Sullenberger, nicknamed "Sully", was flying from LaGuardia Airport to Charlotte Douglas International Airport on January 15, 2009, when barely three minutes after take-off, the Airbus A320 hit a flock of Canada geese, disabling both engines. Sully was able to land the plane safely in the Hudson River and get every passenger off the sinking plane. The aspect of the story I find most moving is that prior to leaving the plane, which was slowly sinking tail first into the Hudson, Sully walked the passageway, twice, to ensure no passengers were still aboard. His actions proved inspirational to people around the world. A film called 'Sully' has recently been released.

Sully's ability to sacrifice for others didn't just appear when he hit the water, his whole life led to this moment. While it is unlikely that we will face such a challenging situation as this, we can all expect to have times when we are called to dig deep for a courage which is fueled by our values and beliefs.

How we act in a time of major challenge, will be the result of how we acted in little challenges. If we do not learn to apologise genuinely, to accompany the lonely, to speak up against bullying or injustice, or to try a co-curricular activity that we think we may find difficult, when the big challenge comes, we are more likely to respond as a wimp, rather than a hero.

I wish to acknowledge the vital role played by staff members who help form our culture of learning and respect. They are skilled in their respective subject areas and roles and display a genuine care for the students. Students often comment on this generosity and speak highly of the sense of community they experience at Ignatius. Thank you to our staff who generously accompany our students on excursions, camps, and Immersions, most of which often occur in vacation time.

Saint Ignatius' College has a significant profile in Adelaide and beyond, and is known as a very good school. This is due in part due to our academic achievements but most importantly, through the quality of our scholars, present and past. They have a reputation for being good people who genuinely care for others, who have the character strength of kindness. When we spend time with

good people, we become better people ourselves. We become more willing to see need and do something about it.

Our Deputy Head for Pastoral Care and Administration at the Senior School, Mr Rob Passaniti, spoke of this in his recent reflection at the *All Saints* mass at the Senior School. He said,

*“I believe that the great saints, through their faith in Jesus, were able to recognise just what the world needed in their time and place, and then they went out and did what was needed to make the world a better place.”*

Identifying need is one thing but responding in love is another. We know that loving others can be hard work, even painful. Dr Bennet Omalu, Captain Chesley Sullenberger, and Caroline Chisholm often struggled as they responded in love for others and perhaps you have experienced this pain also.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta was this year acknowledged by the Church to be a saint due to her care for those in dire need: lepers, the abandoned and the lonely. She often spoke of how God’s love sustained her and enabled her to spread love, but she pointed out, that it must begin at home.

*“I always say that love starts at home: family first, and then your own town or city. It is easy to love people who are far away but it is not always so easy to love those who live with us or right next to us”.*

Saint Ignatius of Loyola expressed a similar idea. *“If you want to be of use to others, begin by taking pains with yourself: the fire that is to enkindle others should be lighted at home”.*

I’m sure Ignatius and Teresa would agree that the term ‘home’ can also apply to ‘school’, our own College, where we learn to respect and love others, even at the cost of our own pain. Teresa pointed out what she called, a perfect paradox, “That if you love until it hurts, there can be no more hurt, only more love”.

Her words form a fitting commission for each of us.

*“Let no-one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God’s kindness; kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile, kindness in your warm greeting.”*

So may the love of God sustain you and give you the courage to go forth in love and to do great things for others. God bless each of you!

**Father Robert J Davoren SJ**

Rector