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College Captain
Speech Day 29 October 2015

Good Afternoon Guest Speaker, the Honourable Christopher Pyne, Chair of Council Fr Mullins, Father Rector, Head of Senior School Mr Coffey, Head of Junior School Mr Fitzpatrick, Distinguished Guests, families, staff and students.

I have a vivid recollection of standing with my school aerobics team a few minutes before we were to compete earlier this year. In that moment, many different thoughts were passing through my mind, 'What if I forget the routine? What if I let my team down? What if I can't even make it through the whole routine?' There was a small part of me that wished that I'd never decided to sign up for the sport, because then I wouldn't have to feel this sense of fear. Yet, I would have missed out on something that I have come to love and on an opportunity for learning and growth.

Most of you have probably felt this way at some stage, perhaps it was on your first day at the Senior School, starting a new job, competing in a sporting competition, or during the first day of Year 12. Often we have a fear of the unknown, a fear of not being accepted by others or a fear of failure. In situations such as these we usually have two options. Either we can walk away or, with courage, we can take up the challenge. From my experience, it is by taking a risk and doing what it is that you're afraid of, that you learn the most and grow the most.

One of the things that I've valued most about my time at Saint Ignatius has been the many opportunities that have been presented to me, yet it's not always easy to take up these opportunities. Despite the fact that I'd been playing the flute since Year 6, it took me until Year 11 to actually have a go at playing in a school band as I was scared of trying something different for fear that I might not be good enough. Looking back, I wish I'd taken up the opportunity much earlier, as I have gained so many friendships and so much enjoyment out of the experience. So if any of you are thinking 'should I...should I not?' about an opportunity at present, and the only thing holding you back is a sense of fear, I say, 'go for

it,' because as we are constantly reminded, our years at school go very quickly and before we know it, the opportunity will have passed.

We often speak about the sense of community that we have here at the College, of the love and generosity shown between staff and students. I am so grateful to all of the staff for their support, compassion and selflessness throughout my years at school. While it can sometimes be easy to think that it is only the students who need to have the courage to take up new opportunities and experiences, I am sure that this is not the case. For staff to leave their families to guide and support us on a pilgrimage to Cambodia and Vietnam, or to lead us in a Kairos retreat, also takes a lot of courage, so I thank all staff who have ever overcome their own fears for the benefit of the students. You really do set a great example.

To the remaining students at the College, during busy times of the term sometimes you may begin to focus more on what's to come after school has finished, but I urge you to appreciate what you have in the present moment.

As author Eckhart Tolle once said,

Most people are never fully present in the now, because unconsciously they believe that the next moment must be more important than this one. But then you miss your whole life, which is never not now.

Throughout your time at school you will inevitably experience setbacks, but don't let this stop you from continuing to strive to do your best. Don't be disheartened by what you consider to be failures and remind yourself that,

A person's most useful asset is not a head full of knowledge, but a heart full of love, an ear ready to listen and a hand willing to help others.

To the Class of 2015, the challenge to us now is to continue to live out the Ignatian values instilled in us throughout our time at school, but this too will take courage. It takes courage to put others before yourself, it takes courage to show love to others if you do not receive it in return, it takes courage to continue to trust in God when things don't go to plan, it takes

courage to do the right thing when all those around you are doing otherwise. But all of us are capable of this, even if we don't believe it.

As Christopher Robin once said to Winnie the Pooh,

Promise me you'll always remember: You're braver than you believe, and stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think.

So as you enter the next stage of your life, try to let go of any self-doubt you may have. Allow yourself to be guided by love and compassion and a desire to help those around you, not by fear.

And as Saint Ignatius would say, *Ite Inflammate Omnia*, 'go, set the world alight.'