



ANNUAL SPEECH DAY AND DISTRIBUTION OF PRIZES #65
THURSDAY, 29 OCTOBER 2015

FR ROBERT J DAVOREN SJ – RECTOR
SPEECH DAY ADDRESS

Chair of Council Fr Paul Mullins, guest of honour the Honourable Christopher Pyne, special guests, staff, students and members of the College family.

In the bright morning sunlight of 24 March 1980, Archbishop Oscar Romero was celebrating mass in a hospital chapel, the Church of the Divine Providence, San Salvador. A car stopped outside and a lone gunman stepped out, unhurried. Resting his rifle on the car door, he aimed carefully down the long aisle to where El Salvador's Archbishop, Oscar Romero, was about to commence communion. A single shot rang out. Romero staggered and fell, dying where he fell, beside the altar.

Despite death threats, he had continued to speak up against the repressive regime in El Salvador. He had always been close to his people and preached a prophetic gospel. He denounced the injustice in his country and supported the development of social organisations. He became the voice of the Salvadoran people when repression had crushed all other channels of expression. In his homily the previous day, he sealed his fate when he took the terrifying step of publicly confronting the military.

Oscar Romero was a surprise in history. The poor never expected him to take their side and the elites of Church and state felt betrayed. He was a compromise candidate elected to head the Bishops Conference by conservative fellow bishops. He was predictable, an orthodox, a pious bookworm. But he lived by real convictions, which he expressed boldly. Archbishop Romero was beatified on 23 May this year.

As Christians we are called to serve others, though it is unlikely that we will need to give our lives in service of others as did Archbishop Romero. Hugh Mackay, an Australian social researcher, wrote a book called *The Good Life*, in which he suggests that unless we engage in genuine service of others, we cannot experience a fulfilled life. He wrote that the good life is one defined by our capacity for selflessness, the quality of our relationships and our willingness to connect with others in a useful way. The good life is certainly not the sum of our security, wealth, status, postcode, career success and levels of happiness.

The crucial test of a life well lived is the quality of our responses to the needs of others. Everything else is peripheral and mostly trivial. From our chance encounters with total strangers to our long-term associations with family, friends, neighbours and colleagues, our connections with other people form the test bed of our sensitivity, our moral courage and our capacity for love.

Sometimes this service may be in the public arena, as is the case for archbishops, military officers and politicians. The importance of service to the community has certainly been a priority in Christopher Pyne's life, in part due to the fine example of his father, Remington Pyne. His father was an eminent eye surgeon in Adelaide and was a key member of the cranio-facial unit in partnership with David David. The life-giving medical outcomes of this team became renowned across the world.

His father also served as a medical officer in the Korean War. Remington Pyne also worked to provide research and support for those with learning difficulties and helped found the SPELD organisation. He died in 1988 at 62 years of age. Christopher's mother, Margaret, continues to be a source of inspiration, and we are blessed to have her with us today. A political career enabled Minister Pyne to make a difference in areas of personal interest, in particular health, indigenous advancement and education. I am hopeful that this theme of public service will feature in his address this morning.

The service of those such as Romero, whose altruism led them to suffer and die, and others like those that fight for their country or engage in significant public service, can be described as heroic.

Hugh Mackay suggests that a nation's character is not defined by such exceptional cases but by those who live outside the spotlight, who stick to the often tedious tasks with which they have been saddled, who accept the responsibilities that go with being ordinary. He describes these as those who:

“ ... plug away, year after thankless year, doing their best to be faithful partners, loving parents, good neighbours and responsible citizens. These are the unsung heroes, the everyday altruists, who maintain the heartbeat of a civilised society and demonstrate that the good life is not beyond our reach, after all.”

I wish to acknowledge those in our College community who through their generosity of service, in the words of Mackay, “ ... do the tedious tasks they have been saddled with, the everyday, ordinary altruists”. They have certainly contributed to the wellbeing and life of the College and are present with us today. Firstly, members of College Council: Father Mullins, Chair of College Council; Dr Suzanne Le Mire, who is also Chair of Foundation; Mrs Di Campbell; and Fr Gerard Healy SJ. The President of the Old Ignatians Association, Mr Eddy Glavas; Mrs Paula Capaldo, treasurer of this association and who is also a member of the College Finance and Legal Committee; the Fidelis Association President, Mrs Monica Klingberg, and the President of the Parents & Friends Association, Mrs Susan Dodson.

Many of you here today have served the College community on committees, at College functions, as coaches or by assisting in College tuckshops. Your contribution has greatly assisted the welfare and positive culture of our College community, and I am most grateful. 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 am pleased to report that the College is in good shape and continues to be thought of as one of the leading educational establishments in Adelaide. Enrolments are sound and we continue to attract excellent staff members, and our alumni are highly regarded for their manner and capability. We must, however, actively avoid any complacency and seek the opportunities that always exist during times of economic challenge: to grow, improve and adapt. There are 1370 students from Reception to Year Twelve, with a further 90 in Ignatius Early Years. The youngest year group present here is Year Three, and I welcome them to their first Speech Day, as I do others who have joined the College this year. This 65th Speech Day is significant for our Year Twelve cohort as it is their last as students. You are especially welcomed!

I would like to make note of some improvements that have recently occurred at the College, or are soon to occur. We were delighted to take possession of the Saint Peter Faber SJ Building in Term Four last year. The building was blessed and commissioned by Fr Philip Marshall and Fr Chris Gleeson SJ. The Music and Drama centres have been well used by staff and students alike and the Richard Flynn Theatre has proven to be a most welcome addition to the College.

Over the summer break, the Dennett Centre was refurbished by the installation of new ceiling, wall lining, lights, ventilation and public address system. In addition the girls change room was modified and updated. A sealed roadway around the Bourke Oval has improved traffic flow and aided pedestrian safety. New sports courts, which can provide six netball or eight tennis courts, were blessed and commissioned at the start of this term. Hockey practice can also take place there. At the Junior School, playgrounds were upgraded and extra equipment was installed.

At the Senior School, we plan to replace the Administration Building with a three-storey complex that will include new teaching spaces, offices, and reception areas, including one for students. A number of student services, including careers and counselling, will be located around a common lounge. A new infirmary will also be part of the building, which we hope to commence this December. The need for a gymnasium at the Junior School remains a major goal, and we continue to search for creative ways to find space for such a large building.

Returning to my theme of service, I believe that College staff also give an example of faithful service. Every staff members plays a role in forming our students, whether they be office staff, book room or tuckshop staff, those who attend to our grounds, or staff teaching students in the classroom. I thank them sincerely for their efforts and know that much hard work and planning is often unseen by others but is hugely important for the welfare and growth of our students.

Many staff members feel the tension between spending time with our students versus sitting at desks completing forms, surveys and compliance documents. As a Jesuit College we need to treasure those aspects of our education that are core and resist less helpful distractions. I am disturbed to learn that some interstate schools have reduced Music and Visual Arts options to provide more time for NAPLAN. During his time as Minister for Education Mr Pyne acknowledged the concerns about overcrowded curricula and worked to address this.

Pressure to include more content persists. Some recent ideas for what should be taught in schools include how to interact safely with dogs, cyber safety education, fertility advice, family violence awareness, budgeting, and how to complete tax returns! While many such courses may be helpful in themselves, they will sap time from other subject areas and are likely to draw teachers away from core instructional activities.

I would like to thank Christopher Pyne for agreeing to be our guest speaker today and also note that he has been a regular attendee at our Speech Days, in part due to his family's donation of the Prize for Classical Studies, named after his parents. (His father, Remington, was a devotee of Classics). Minister, you may be pleased to learn that 51 students study Latin in Years Seven to Eleven, and this year five students have already sat the final year assessments in Latin as part of the NSW HSC. Additionally, we continue to offer French, Italian, Indonesian and Mandarin languages.

I also wish to acknowledge Christopher's wife, Carolyn, who in addition to caring for four children has given significant time to the College community in her role of Treasurer of the Parents and Friends Association.

I believe the students of this College also model Christian service. The genuine care and friendliness shown by older students towards the younger ones has become a mark of our College. Over the last few years, senior leaders have initiated a number of programs that continue to thrive and give joy to many. These include St Vincent de Paul collections, the Bells of La Storta, Blue Day, Mission Day linked to House Performances, the Cage, and Walk for Life, which was initiated this year. The Junior School Mission Day continues to be a popular and successful event.

I wish to thank Rebecca Munday and Harry Scanlon, our student College Captains, and also Michelle Nguyen and Madison O'Brien, Captains for Liturgy and Social Justice respectively. Together with the House Captains and other appointed leaders you have worked hard to inspire and lead the younger students. As you prepare to hand on your roles of service to those in the year following, I suspect you must wonder how the last year could have gone so quickly.

The video shown here today has been edited by Mr Greg Skeed, with content contributed by the STIGIT team and Matthew Maloney. I thank all concerned.

And for our Year Twelve students, whether you are sad to be leaving or are eager to depart (or a mixture of both), I hope that you feel well prepared and have many happy memories to take with you. I would like to leave you with two final thoughts, which both suggest each of us can make a unique contribution, based on our particular gifts.

The first is by John Henry Newman.

"God has created me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. He has not created me for naught. I shall do good; I shall do His work."

The second is a prayer attributed to Archbishop Romero.

"We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us. We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities. We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest."

This College is indeed a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. I pray that the seeds of hope planted within you will flourish and bear much fruit. May there be many opportunities for the Lord's grace to enter and sustain you. God bless each of you!

Fr Robert J Davoren SJ (Class of '71)
RECTOR