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College Captain

Speech Day 30 October 2014

Good Afternoon Fr Rector, Head of Senior School Mr Coffey, Head of Junior School Mr Fitzpatrick, Distinguished guests, teachers, staff members, parents, friends and students.

One of the highest honours a sportsman can achieve is to compete in an Olympic games. Many athletes deal with overwhelming hardship and years of adversity on their path to the Olympics. So, when they finally reach the Olympic stage, their accomplishment is so significant that at the conclusion of their event, they are not referred to as former or ex-Olympian; instead, they are remembered simply as Olympians. For their perseverance and dedication, each competitor is deserving of the title of Olympian for the remainder of their life. Once their Olympic career is over, they have earned the label; they remain Olympians forevermore. This is their privilege.

Similarly, on graduating from an Ignatian College, you do not become an ex-Ignatian or a past Ignatian (or, contrary to popular belief, an old Ignatian). For the person you have become, you remain simply, an Ignatian. This is our privilege. From the first day you set foot on College grounds until the day you graduate and beyond, you are an Ignatian. To have earned this title you will have: dedicated yourself to your studies; committed yourself to a world of music, drama or sport; strived to acquire the qualities of compassion and spirit; and fiercely tried to achieve your very best whilst helping others to do so as well. For many years you will do these things, and when your time comes to an end at this College - as it soon will for the Year Twelves - you do not become an ex-Ignatian, you remain an Ignatian for the entirety of your life. The Year Twelves I have the honour of speaking on behalf of today are completely deserving of the Ignatian title and all that it represents.

Very few Olympians depart the Olympic arena with a medal. Today, however, every graduating Ignatian departs this College with a gold medal. This doesn't mean I've purchased 144 plastic gold medals from 'Cheap as Chips' that I am about to present to the graduating class. No, this medal is not external or physical and unfortunately you won't be given free drinks or be able to pick up a date at a bar by using it. The gold medal you receive from this College marks the attainment of great character and spirit. This medal is visible every time you are generous, selfless and caring: traits each graduate learns from both their loving parents and the wonderful mentors at the College, their teachers and the staff.

All the Ignatians I have encountered, whether they graduated last year or many decades ago, carry these ideals with them. These Ignatians continue to display generosity, kindness and genuine pride in this College

at every moment. Although it is evident they have matured, and in several cases grown terrible beards, in countless ways they are still the same. They have remained true Ignatians.

When the student body leaves this hall today, some will be carrying prizes, and some will not. This is an unfortunate reality of speech day. There are a finite number of awards to give and sadly many deserving people cannot be recognised. Equally, some aspiring student leader nominees may not have had their hopes realised. So often, recognition is simply a matter of being in the right place at the right time.

For those students for whom the universe has not perfectly aligned this year, consider this: Michael Jordan was not selected for his High School Basketball team; Abraham Lincoln lost eight elections and failed in business twice prior to becoming one of America's greatest Presidents; Steven Spielberg was rejected three times by the University of California School of Cinema Arts; Walt Disney, upon being fired from his newspaper job, was told he lacked imagination and was without any good ideas; JK Rowling was rejected by twelve different publishing houses with her Harry Potter Novels; Vincent Van Gogh sold only one out of nine hundred paintings whilst he was alive; and even Colonel Sanders, at the age of 65, was reportedly rejected 1009 times before he found a restaurant owner who would trial his outstanding chicken recipe. I'm sure I speak for everyone in this room when I say how glad I am that the Colonel didn't give up on his eleven secret herbs and spices.

These individuals and many more were not initially recognised for their brilliance, but this did not make them unsuccessful. It made them quite the opposite. Through perseverance, self-belief and probably some good fortune they were eventually able to excel. So you may leave this hall empty handed today - that is, barring lolly wrappers, that incidentally I have been asked to remind you to place in rubbish bins that are conveniently located at each exit - but don't let this deter you from believing in yourself.

Greatness isn't always recognised initially and unfortunately it may not be appreciated today, or even tomorrow. Although you cannot know exactly what awaits you in the future, be assured that your talents and your worth will one day be appreciated.

The saying goes 'when one door closes, another door opens.' Although the door to future endeavours has now presented itself to the graduates sitting before me, know that the Ignatian door never closes. Fortunately, the steps you take forward from here will be as a person of conscience, generosity and integrity, because you are an Ignatian for all eternity; this much will never change.