Principal Dr. Kennard’s address at Morning Assembly, 1 September 2006

A New School Year Begins

Welcome to you all at this the first assembly on the first day of the 2006/2007 school year. I hope that each of you had a safe and restful holiday and pleased to return to St. Paul’s College for the start of the new year.

I would especially like to welcome the new students to our School and in particular those boys who have joined us in Form 1. I hope that you are not feeling too apprehensive this morning but looking forward to joining our school family. I would ask that all boys in Form 2 to Form 7 take the time and effort to help the new students adjust to life at St. Paul’s and to make them feel very much at home as soon as possible.

I would also like to welcome all new members of staff. I request that all students assist our new teachers in the days ahead to adjust to their new school and new classes.

The summer holidays bring an opportunity not only to relax but also to take on new challenges. Some of the boys I have spoken to over the past two days have told me that they have been to special French and Japanese language courses; have experienced the world of work in Law and Accounting firms; have undertaken leadership training courses; have assisted as a swimming pool supervisor; have helped as a volunteer at a local hospital. I am delighted to know that St. Paul’s College boys are not simply spending their summer holiday in front of the television or on the internet.

Of course, summer holidays for teachers and students are all about spending quality time with your family and friends either quietly here in Hong Kong or on the mainland or overseas. Unfortunately, we often neglect our families once the school year commences, often blaming our busy schedules for not taking the time with our families as we should. Let us not forget that our families are extremely important for our general well-being. Indeed, for teachers and students alike, your family is the most important source of strength as you tackle the many challenges that you will face over the next ten months.

Many of you will have taken part in the Global Classroom tours over the summer break. I am delighted to hear that each of the tours passed without incident and that all boys and teachers returned safely. This year we were able to offer a mixture of tours to destinations that appealed to the various interests of our students. I was fortunate to be able to spend time with the School Choir at their workshops and concerts at a major choir festival in Mainz, Germany. The School Choir’s performances were sensational and left an indelible mark on other choirs at the festival and in the local communities around Mainz. I have also been hearing about the success of each of the other global classroom tours and we look forward to hearing about those experiences at assemblies in the future.

The reason that I mentioned the importance of the safe return of our students and teachers is that we are living in an increasingly troubled world. The threat of terrorist atrocities and the uncertainty of what the future holds in so many parts of the world is cause of
great concern for all of us. Somewhat ironically, Hong Kong today is possibly one of the safest places on earth in which to live. The problems that confront most Western countries, and are being experienced throughout the Middle East, might appear to have little relevance to us here in Hong Kong. However, we do not live in a bubble and we must play our part on the world stage. This is one of the reasons why I believe the Global Classroom project is so important. It is critical that each of you has a Global Awareness and a clear understanding and appreciation of world issues and events.

In addition to Global Awareness, I also want to focus this year on two other areas; Academic Endeavour and Student Leadership. The results of last year’s Form 5 and Form 7 students in the local public examinations were very pleasing and kept-up the high standards set by St. Paul’s students over the years. Academic endeavor requires working hard in all of your subjects and achieving the very best result of which you are capable. It means working to your capacity. Unfortunately, in a few cases it is evident that some boys did not work to capacity. Some of those boys chose not to work in a particular subject, deciding that the subject was ‘not important’. I say to you that all subjects are important and provide you with a balanced programme. Work to the best of your ability in all subjects. By doing this, you will maximise your opportunities in the future.

Life at St. Paul’s is not only about the business of classroom learning. It is also about showing Leadership. We want boys who are prepared to help and assist; who are willing to take on a challenge; and who are confident in accepting a leadership role. This school has a wonderful array of student associations and a long-established House system. I ask each of you to play your part in the SA and in your House to ensure that the activities offered are of the highest quality and of greatest benefit to life here at St. Paul’s and to life in the general community beyond these school walls.

It is the aim of all of our teachers that when a boy leaves St. Paul’s College he will have acquired the skills necessary to take his place in an increasingly complex world. It is also our aim to have given each of you an opportunity to experience the Christian faith and to show you how you can embrace that faith in your lives. We are a school of the Anglican Church, and the close ties between St. Paul’s and the Church that were evident on the day of our foundation, remain with us today. Indeed, the reason we have an Anglican Priest amongst us each day is to reinforce the importance of the word-of-God in our school and in our lives.

Ours is well-known and highly respected school in Hong Kong. This year we celebrate our 155th anniversary and there are many activities planned, particularly over the next four months. Each of you be involved in this celebration and many of you will have a specific part to play at one of the functions or activities. I ask that you capture the spirit of the occasion and show pride in your school. Yes, our school is special. We are the oldest school in Hong Kong and we cherish our heritage. This year in particular, I ask that you take extra pride in your School by showing respect for your teachers and classmates; by keeping your classrooms and the school grounds clean; by maintaining the highest standard of dress and appearance; and by full attendance at extra classes,
rehearsals and performances. Very few schools around the world are 155 years old, so let’s celebrate.

You may well have already noticed a number of changes around the school from last year. Many of these changes will be outlined to you in due course by your Form teachers. However, I would like to outline two points.

Firstly, the new Annex is close to completion but it is still a few weeks before we are able to use the new classrooms and facilities. In the meantime, it is essential that each of you understands that the new building is ‘out-of-bounds’ and must not be entered at any time. This is for your own safety, as construction work is still in progress.

Secondly, the format of the assemblies will be different this year. In particular, the daily notices will not be read out. From now on, all notices and information will be displayed on the televisions located around the school grounds. It is now your responsibility to stop and read the information on the television screens; at the start of the day, during the day, and as you leave the school grounds. This will take some discipline on your part but I am sure you will agree that this development will streamline how information is communicated to the student body.

A good school is one that has developed the capacity for students and teachers to work together as co-learners. Let us at St. Paul’s be a school of co-learners. I am looking forward to the new school year and I hope that you are also excited about the year to come.

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