

## Leavers' address – Andrew Parkin, Principal – May 10<sup>th</sup> 2019

We have spent the last 2 years talking to you about so many different aspects of your education, most of which, in some shape or form has been about your academic future successes and it is almost with a sense of disbelief that we gather here this morning to say farewell to you. And we have in fact built on the work of your secondary and junior schools in what has in effect been a 14 year long educational journey. These past 2 years have, I hope, been packed full of new experiences and new opportunities and I hope that these will be things that you will remember from your time here at St Dominic's. We have assessed and tested and examined you and sometimes have had to have difficult conversations but now all of that is behind us and we look forward to the exams, albeit with some trepidation, I want to look for just a minute further beyond all of this to university, employment and life beyond school and college.

All our work as a College around your academic performance is of course of the utmost importance but I want for a moment to think about the other skills which are, I believe, often so much more important than a grade on a piece of paper. In a world that is changing so rapidly, where the future is very difficult to predict, I would say that it is not necessarily your academic ability that will see you through life, but it is who you are as a person, an individual, God's unique creation made specifically in His image, that will be of perhaps more significance. Allowing your heart and mind to work in tandem at all times is of utmost importance – remembering and acknowledging that sometimes one can be more powerful than the other. There are so many personal attributes that are essential for our world today. Being kind of heart and mind, being prepared to stand up for those less fortunate than oneself, being willing to help, to listen, to support another friend or family member, contributing to the community in small and big ways, actively trying to do something that will 'save the planet' and always trying to put others ahead of yourself because I do believe that 'he who is last shall be first'.

Each generations' world is different to the one that has gone before – you are born post 2000, digital young adults where often the instantaneous is too slow. You will be required to live in a different way to previous generations but those personal skills mentioned above will remain a constant as they have done for generations past and I hope that you will do all you can to nurture your personal self in order to play a full and effective role in society.

Other skills that are important too – getting up when the alarm goes off each morning and never being late, not succumbing to minor ailments or illnesses and of course, always wearing a lanyard if required to do so. This list is very short and only the tip of the iceberg but I guess what is so important is that you are prepared to look out for those closest to you and that you will be willing to contribute to our city and indeed our world as we are truly living in a global age.

Your learning journey which started back in 2005 at primary school will we hope, continue perhaps at University or in your chosen career, as undergraduates or employees, as 20 some-things, as 30 some-things, as husbands, wives, partners, as parents and perhaps eventually as grandparents. Your learning will continue in a world that is ever changing, perhaps faster than at any point in its history – where past conventions and norms are forever being brushed aside and where technology will continue to be interwoven into the very fabric of society. You might retire around 2070 and your children and grandchildren will most likely live to see the dawn of the next century learning and growing – who we are and what we are.

But a day like this is inevitably tinged with mixed emotions – joy and happiness, a sense of relief that most of the hard work is over apart from a few minor examinations in a few days time and also sadness as we reflect on the time that we have all just lived through and the fact that we will never again be all assembled here together in one place. You have been a year group full of dedication and a willingness to learn, to listen and be ambitious for your futures – they are all admirable attributes and things that each of you should be rightly

proud of. You have also been young men and women who have bought into the culture, ethos and mission of this college wholeheartedly through your behaviour, your attitude, your willingness to help others and your fulsome engagement in an array of different events and activities that have made us all far richer than we could possibly imagine. And for the most part you have even worn your lanyards with tremendous pride and become true St Dominic's students!

You have also, as a year group, been pioneers – you have collectively raised more funds for local, national and international charities than any other previous year group. You have had success in a variety of different sports in particular basketball, football and netball, helped to stage our biggest ever College Production – Grease The Musical, travelled to a variety of different countries including the USA, Iceland, France, Poland and Wales and have kept pace with fashions in particular the ripped jean look and wi-fi earphone look. And you were the first year group to develop a really effective Student Executive who have made a significant contribution to the life of the College in their time in post.

You have raised our awareness of the politics of our country by participating in the various discussions and debates and I have enjoyed very much engaging with so many of you on different issues of the day – I am sure that some of you will enter the political world and look forward to you being MPs and even Cabinet Ministers in the future.

All of the aforementioned are the very essence of what this College is about, our willingness to help, to support, to guide and most importantly to love our neighbour as God has asked of each and everyone of us so to do. As your Principal I could not have asked you to do more and I know that we, the staff, have been enriched by each and every one of you over the last two years. I wish you all the very best – whatever you do in life make sure you enjoy it – despite its many challenges, life is wonderful and a gift from God that you must and should cherish every single day – be honest to yourself, be who you are and what you are, love in abundance and strive at all times to be good and to do good.

Before you leave us remember to say thank you – to your teachers, to your tutors and to all the staff with whom you have interacted over the last 2 years. And so now the hard work, that 14 year journey, is about to come to fruition – the journey in school and latterly in college is all but over and I want to close with something that sums up how I feel today about the end of our time together because you have made me better at what I do now and better at what I will do in the future

*Life is like a journey on a train with its stations, with changes of routes and sometime the occasional cancelation! At birth we boarded the train and met our parents and we believe they will always travel on our side. However, at some station our parents will step down from the train, leaving us on this journey alone. As time goes by, other people will board the train and they will be significant i.e. our siblings, friends, children and even the love of our life. Many will step down and leave a permanent vacuum. Others will go **so unnoticed** that we don't realize that they vacated their seats! This train ride will be full of joy, fantasy, expectations, hellos, goodbyes, farewells and sorrow. Success consists of having a good relationship with all the passengers requiring that we give the best of ourselves.*

*The mystery to everyone of us is this: We do not know at which station we ourselves will step down. So, we must live in the best way - Love, forgive and offer the best of who we are. It is important to do this because when the time comes for us to step down and leave our seat empty, we should leave behind beautiful memories for those who will continue to travel on the train of life without us – thank you for being part of my journey here at St Dominic's.*