

SJI 162ND ANNIVERSARY SPEECH & GRADUATION DAY



GUEST OF HONOUR

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FOUNDERS' HALL
38 MALCOLM ROAD, SINGAPORE 308274

Dear Brother Paul, Thiam Seng, Adrian, Teachers, Friends & Fellow Josephians

Thank you for this singular pleasure to join you for your 162nd Anniversary Speech & Graduation Day!

SJI has always been a special place for me and many of us who have passed through her hallowed halls: a place where boys become men; where values are taught & modelled, and friendships are formed for life.

Our SJI school motto reads:

ORA ET LABORA

Or (in English)

Study hard & pray hard.

At the risk of being evicted from the SJI OBA, may I add a short phrase to our motto:

**Study Hard
Play Hard
Pray Hard**

Or (in latin)

**Ora et Labora
Laboris gloria Ludi**

Why do I suggest this? Simply because this is how we spent our days at SJI!

So allow me to elaborate on these 3 points. My wife always says that if you cannot summarize what you want to say in 3 points, then it's not worth listening to!

1. Study Hard

This is perhaps the simplest but hardest truth.

We are here to learn and improve ourselves. In our time, we were blessed and privileged to have the Lasallian brothers to teach & instruct us. Brother Kevin Byrne came to Singapore in 1978 and we were his first class: 4 Science 6! We were a highly intelligent bunch but also an obstinate and obnoxious bunch who took delight in “torturing” our teachers to see how long they would last especially any relief teachers who were unlucky enough to be posted to our class! Our class monitor (who is now a CEO) even kept a log of how long it took before the Chinese relief teacher broke down in tears! But to this day, we still meet up with our SJI teachers for makan. They have a wonderful spirit of “forgiveness.”

Bro Kevin Byrne was our form teacher and also our Literature teacher. I recall that we had to read and research a dreadful book called “Brighton Rock” by Graham Greene. It was mostly about a gangster called Pinky who went about slashing people with his razor blade, trying to understand his life & psyche!

Anyhow, we all hated the book. So, as a class, we hatched a plan so that we all read and knew a section of the book so whenever Bro Kevin asked a question, someone in the class of 4S6 had an answer for him! Although none of us actually read the whole book from start to finish!

But seriously, we studied hard for our O levels and we all did well. To this day, Bro Kevin remembers our class of 4 S 6 “smart boys but rather playful!” Which leads to my next point.

2. Play Hard

We played hard at SJI! Be it soccer at Waterloo Street, or the Scouts 2104 or the monthly SJI-CHIJ outings we planned in Sec 4; we had our fun!

I made the most of my ECA or CCA time at SJI. I was in the Scouts 2014 troupe, in the LDDS, in the school choir amongst others. It gave us a more holistic perspective on life. I learnt to cook in the scouts and even won my patrol a prize for cooking a chicken underground at the Sariumbun camp site!

I represented SJI at the Singapore Youth Festival and several oratorical and debate events, where I met other students from other schools. I was forced out of my naturally “introvert” self, to embrace public speaking, something which I don’t instinctively enjoy. But my SJI teachers taught and equipped me to stand up in front of 100’s and win SJI the 1st prize in the Sin Chew Jit Poh National Chinese oratorical competition. To this day, I can’t believe that we actually pulled it off!

But most of all, I remember hanging out at the Sarabat stalls on Waterloo street with my SJI school mates enjoying the Indian rojak, the Teh Tarik! Ah yes those were happy days indeed!

3. Pray Hard

Whatever your faith is, I would encourage you to practice it. As a Christian Brother School, we find our faith in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ who is the penultimate Josephian who lived all the Christian values and chose to give His life as a ransom for many.

When the good times come, give thanks!

When the bad times hit, seek God and His comfort.

To pray is to have a conversation with God. God is almighty and ruler of all, and yet He asks us to pray. I always wonder why? What earthly interest could almighty God have in any of us? To be honest, I don't know.

But I know that He craves communion with His creation and seeks to bless us with His grace.

As our heavenly Father, He says that He loves us with a love eternal. Now that sounds like a good offer to me.

So take Him up on His challenge:

**Ask and you will receive
Seek and you shall find
Knock and the door will be opened to you**

Let me end by sharing with you a little poem that a close friend sent to me when I was going through tough times, back in 2000 (yes I know, I am old!):

**“Don't ever be afraid to try to make things better;
You might be surprised at the results.
Don't ever forget that achievement isn't as hard as it seems.
Don't ever stop loving; don't ever stop believing;
Don't ever stop dreaming your dreams.”**

Thank you for listening and remember:

**Ora et Labora
Laboris gloria Ludi**
