

MAYOR ROBERT BRIA

Remarks at St Joseph's Memorial School – Year 7 Graduation

Tuesday 13 December 2016

Good evening everyone. I am delighted to be here to share this special occasion with you.

I would like to thank Amy Parker for her very kind invitation to be a part of this graduation ceremony.

This is the second time I have had the honour of attending a Year 7 graduation for St Joseph's Memorial School.

Let me start by congratulating all of the Year 7 students graduating this evening as well those Year 6 students moving to different schools in 2017.

I'm sure every parent and grandparent here has mixed feelings about tonight.

Feelings of immense pride and joy while at the same time a feeling of sadness.

From one parent of children at this school to other parents, I offer my best wishes and congratulations for the outstanding job you have done in raising your beautiful daughters and sons to prepare them for the next exciting and challenging chapter in their lives.

I also want to congratulate Acting Principal Ms Helena Card, former Principal Mr Craig Fosdike and all of the teachers and staff at St Joseph's Memorial School, past and present.

All of you have played different but equally important roles in the education of the children up to now.

To the graduands, tonight is your night.

It is a night to enjoy, a night to reflect and a night to say goodbye.

But is also a night to give thanks; thanks to your teachers, thanks your fellow students and of course, thanks to your parents and families who love you and have supported you over the years.

And finally, thanks to Saint Mary of the Cross MacKillop, whose legacy of love, wisdom, compassion and justice you have inherited as students at this great school.

Tonight not only represents an end but also a beginning.

Your primary school years are almost over and your secondary school years await you.

I hope that in the days and years ahead your memories of St Joseph's Memorial School will not be of days but of moments, not of lessons but of laughter, not of projects but of play.

But whatever your memories, cherish them forever. Hold onto them as you would hold onto your mother or father. Share them as you would share your love for your brother or sister.

The first chapter of your story is about to close and another is about to open.

Your life is your story and your childhood is only the Introduction.

Nevertheless, it is the most important chapter because it is the chapter that tells all of us about the main character, you.

You have introduced yourself to the world with the love and help of your families, your friends and the St Joseph's Memorial School community, who have all shaped you as an individual and helped to define the characteristics that make you the beautiful and unique child you are.

But the next chapter - Chapter One - is yours to write, as is every other chapter of your story that will follow.

Will your story have chapters about success, courage, disappointment, happiness or adventure?

Will its pages be filled with love, wisdom, compassion and justice as Mary MacKillop would want?

If so, will you be the ‘ripple of hope’ that Robert F. Kennedy spoke of fifty years ago; the young person “who stands up for an ideal,” or does something to improve the lives of others, or speaks out against injustice.ⁱ

You are the author; the choice is yours.

And, while your story may not be a best-seller, it can be a story about the best that you can be.

And, with His help and His blessing, there is nothing to stop you.

Graduands, as parents, grandparents and teachers we know there is a lot of talent in this room.

We have seen it on the football oval. We have seen it on the netball court. We have seen it at art exhibitions and performances.

And, we have seen in in the classroom as part of your ‘Learning Journey.’

But as you go from being big fish in a small pond to small fish in a big pond you may feel shy or nervous about showing students at your new school the extent of your talent, whether it is in sport, art, science, maths, dance or music.

If you ever feel this way, just remember the words of Pope Francis:

“Dear young people do not bury your talents, the gifts that God has given you! Do not be afraid to dream of great things!”ⁱⁱ

Tomorrow your time as students of St Joseph’s Memorial School will come to an end.

For those of us you leave behind who love you and care about your future, we pray that your faith in God will endure, your talents will shine, your hope will ripple, and your dreams of great things will come true.

God bless you. Merry Christmas and best wishes for the future.

ⁱ Robert F. Kennedy, ‘Day of Affirmation Address at Cape Town University,’ South Africa, 6 June 1966.
<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/rfkcapetown.htm>

ⁱⁱ Pope Francis, www.churchofpresentation.org/images/PDFs/ConfHandbk.pdf