

“Earn it”

Leavers’ Mass for Year 6, 18 July 2022

Dave Navarro (School Business Manager, 2019-2022)

It has been both a privilege and pleasure to serve the St Joseph’s community over the last three years as staff. However, as a St Joseph’s parent for the last ten years, and particularly as a parent of year 6, whom we celebrate today, I do also see it as a duty; one which I feel particularly proud of today.

I stand before two possibly quite different generations of pupils and alumni here today.

On one hand we have our Year 6, who leave school this week, the year group which has suffered the most educational disruption due to COVID, and yet have amazed us with their energy, resilience and outstanding results.

On the other, we have generations of pupils, staff and Governors who have returned to this school today to celebrate our shared legacy, to meet old friends, and reminisce about times past in their old school. We thank you for your service to the school and your generosity in returning and travelling in today’s challenging conditions is acknowledged.

As I searched for a theme to bring you all together, I thought back to a scene of the WW2 movie, which many of you are probably too young to watch just yet, called “Saving Private Ryan”.

It is a movie about bravery, sacrifice and the duty of each generation to the other. Without spoiling the movie, there is a scene, when an older soldier looks to a younger soldier and offers him two words of advice that then resonates throughout the younger man’s life.

In this scene, the older soldier says to the younger soldier: “Earn it”

This is my message to you, Year 6, and your responsibility and indeed your entitlement as you leave St Joseph’s. But earn “what” exactly, what is “it”?

Let me explain, what “it” is.

Earn it

“It” is the hard work that your Governors, teachers, and all support staff have put into your school and making everything in it about you getting the best education possible: from the library, to outdoor areas, to online learning, devices, arranging trips, competitions, guest speakers, even down to making sure you have reading books for the summer.

Earn it

“It” is the countless hours, driving you to your school clubs and weekend clubs, to fixtures and competitions, to your trips and residential, to exams and interviews, preparing your uniform and your bag, your lunch and water bottle, your cap, sunscreen and medication.

“It” is the dozens of consent forms, questionnaires, parentpay items, school app forms and notifications and Google classroom posts.

“It” is each time we ran home to get the PE kit, homework or bottle for mufti day that you accidentally forgot.

“It” is the worry and stress we went through each week to “help” you with your “time to write”, “your” 3D model of Crystal Palace, or “your” home-made Easter hat.

And “it” is the stress of your parents having to relearn fractions, SPAG and “whatever a fronted adverbial” is, to make sure you excel in your exams.

Earn it

“It” is the many, many times we comforted you when you felt lonely, scared, worried, and anxious.

“It” is for us attending and supporting all your nativities, fairs, concerts, and productions and watching you develop your acting, singing and musical talents with curiosity, enthusiasm and forgiveness.

St Joseph's, we are all privileged to stand on the shoulders of those who have made sacrifices, who have given us a helping hand, so that we may climb up, to see higher.

We who are here are indebted to those who went without, so that we may have more.

So that we, can be more.

Some of you, especially alumni, may wonder about the origins of our relatively new school motto, "Together We Can".

No, it wasn't from Bob the Builder, but is actually a derivation from President Obama's catchphrase during his first campaign, of "Yes, We Can". The website designer suggested it to us, as after visiting the school, they felt it captured the "we can do anything" spirit of the school.

I'm sure you all agree it's worked out very well for us as a way of bringing together our community, particularly during the challenging last few years.

It's therefore only fitting that I close this speech, with a quote from the President himself.

President Obama once said to a graduating class (Howard University, 2016):

"Not everything that can be faced, can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced."

"Each of us is only here because someone else faced down challenges for us."

"We are only who we are because someone else struggled and made sacrifices for us."

"That is the story of your country, it is the story of your families and now it is your story."

"Now it is your turn, and the good news is you are ready."

To the class of 2022

On behalf of the school, your parents and carers, and all alumni gathered here, congratulations.

May you be worthy of the sacrifices and struggles which brought you here.

We wish you every success in your future studies and in living out lives full of achievement, but also of service to others.

“Now it is your turn, and the good news is you are ready.”

Earn it!