

Speech by Daniel Hall, Captain St Pius X College

2017 Prefects' Investiture

Chatswood Civic Centre

Thursday 26th October 2017



Good afternoon Deputy Commissioner Burn, Mr Couani, parents, staff and students.

With many things in life, the beginnings can often be the hardest part. The challenges we face, when approached head on, can seem daunting and insurmountable. School is no different. Responsibilities and expectations, day in, day out, and the ultimate goal of the HSC, can at times seem like an impossible obstacle course, a course through which our chances of passing in one piece seem slim.

At times, then, it can be best to start from the end, and work backwards, to imagine ourselves across the crevasse, on top of the mountain, basking in the light at the end of the tunnel.

It is often said that hindsight is a wonderful thing, but it's a luxury that we as young men weaving our way through the maze of high school, are not yet afforded. We are not yet the custodians of our own experience, but just for a moment, imagine...

If we think ahead - to looking back - on our school journey, what would we see?

Undoubtedly, none of us would see a straight and narrow path. Our paths won't be covered by a fluffy red carpet, and they won't be sheltered from the wind and the rain – the trials and tribulations of school life. Often the road we travel will lack signs and streetlights, and we might find it hard to figure out which way we're walking, or even to find solid ground beneath our feet.

More than likely, the path will wind up and over mountains, and then disappear into the gaping valleys that the world lays before us. It will flow with the grace of a crayon line drawn by the left hand of a right handed toddler, and will be a web of dead ends and reroutes, as we are led astray by fleeting interests, temporary people, and our own wavering sense of identity.

Without fail, the path of every student will be littered with fallen logs and potholes, both the result of our own mistakes, and the hapless hands that we are dealt. In some cases, they will take every ounce of strength and fortitude to overcome, but it is these obstacles that, once behind us, repay their debts twice over as we grow and learn from them.

What may not be clear to us all now is how different our paths will look. Given the same blue shorts and grey shirt, and ritually inspected to ensure that every hair follicle on every boy follows the code, it can be easy to lapse into the belief that we are just pawns in a big game of chess. Labelled with a student number, and branded by our academic, sporting and social aptitude, our malleable young minds can fall into rigid moulds that society creates for

us. We are, at times, drawn together by the magnet of normality, and it can seem easiest to take the route straight down the middle.

It is our vibrancy, our individuality, our passions and our faults, however, that ensure that we strive for more than the ordinary. No two paths will be the same, and nor should they be. St Pius X College prides itself on many things: academic excellence, sporting success, cultural pursuits, a stable wifi connection... but above all Pius prides itself on cultivating holistic and brilliant young men, and there is no room for mediocrity among brilliance.

We can achieve so much more as a school community if there are 1137 people living 1137 different lives, and bringing 1137 different personalities than if we all chased just one illusion of normality. You can't build a car with a thousand right wing mirrors, and you can't put together a cricket team if everyone is batting at number three. If you're the handball king, or the chess champion, or the budding lacrosse superstar, just be you, aim high, and wait for the world to catch up. Carve your own path though the concrete jungle that you will come to adoringly call home, so that at the call of "pens down" in last HSC exam, when you do finish up and look back, you will have something to be proud of.

There is no shortage of individuals among the fine group of young men I see before me, and so I cannot understate what an honour and privilege it is to be elected as college captain for 2018. I speak on behalf of Nikita, Jack, and the newly invested leadership team when I say that we are eternally grateful for the opportunity bestowed upon us by our mates, our teachers, and our school, and we promise to repay the faith placed in us over the next 12 months and make this college proud.

It is fitting also that in their absence I acknowledge the work done by the leaders of 2017, and the indelible impression that they have made on the college community.

For some in this room, a marathon awaits you. I look forward to being a part of that marathon, and I encourage you to make the most of the opportunities given to you at this great school. For others - my fellow year 12s - if our entire school career was condensed into the time we spend in homeroom each morning, we would have just one minute left. Boys, in the words of Rudyard Kipling, "fill that unforgiving minute, with sixty seconds worth of distance run". Let's drink every drop of cool, filtered, plastic-bottle-saving water that this school has to offer us, so that when we finish up, and reflect on our journey for real, we won't be looking back at the words "what if?" in our rear view mirrors, but instead will be looking ahead, confidently and eagerly, into the future.

Thank you.