

**Address at the Final Service for St Mark's College
by the Head of College, Professor Don Markwell,
St Peter's Cathedral, Adelaide
Saturday 29 October 2022**

What a remarkable year we have had!

The year that began with masks has ended with Marksensfest and the High Table Cup.

Several weeks ago, in the interviews for next year's Assistant Deans, one of the candidates made me sit up and think when they said – "the theme of this year has been 'becoming the best version of yourself'".

I thought back to Caitlin's excellent speech of welcome to our new students in February when she spoke of getting at St Mark's – in her words, quote - "the opportunity to meet amazing people and become the best version of yourself".

That idea of becoming the best version of ourselves was one that I took up in what I said here in this Cathedral in our Commencement Service at the end of Welcome Week. You will have noticed that the Chaplain in his sermon this afternoon kept coming back to that phrase.

I thought back to the fact that when a profile of Caitlin was published on our website as part of our celebration of the 40th anniversary of coeducation this year, that phrase from her speech - "become the best version of yourself" - was highlighted.

I thought back to Gracie Rowland's song at the arts evening in Welcome Back Week when - on the night of her 21st birthday – she sang "All I want" by Kodakid, with the lines

Cause you brought out the best of me
A part of me I'd never seen

I quoted those words in my short remarks at the Great Gatsby Ball that the Committee organised at the Stamford Grand hotel at Glenelg at the end of that week, and said that making choices to be the best version of ourselves, including choosing to be with people who bring out the best in us, even parts of us we've never seen, seems like a pretty good approach to life.

You might have noticed that the prayers that Ella and Cam read earlier in this service included the line – "Help us all to become better versions of ourselves and inspire us to live lives of service to your glory [that is, to the glory of God] and for the benefit of others".

It's interesting that that prayer, which has been prayed at St Mark's services for many years, connects the idea of becoming better versions of ourselves with living lives of service and with helping others.

I wonder whether, if you have thought this year about becoming the best version of yourself, you have thought about how you might live a life of service, including helping others within our College community and in the wider community, perhaps through the Charitable Foundation, and whether you have thought about how your career might be one of service to others and to the community.

At the College's Final Service in this Cathedral in 1962, 60 years ago this month, the founding Master of the College, Sir Archibald Grenfell Price, spoke in memory of the man whom he described as "the foremost founder of St Mark's", Canon Julian Bickersteth, who had just died.

Archie Price said that Canon Bickersteth had lived to see the result of his labours in this College including – quote – "above all the rapid growth of its great traditions of duty and service which were based upon the ideals of its founders".

Our great tradition of service is based upon the ideals of our founders.

We are, of course, heading to the Centenary of the founding of this College in 1925, and that has had me looking again at some of the documents which our founders prepared 100 years ago, including in making the case for why people should donate money to help create this College in the first place.

The founders argued that the College would provide – and I quote – "Training for the students in ideals of 'Service'".

Over subsequent years, including in this Cathedral, the founding Master, Archie Price, promoted what he called the application of the "trained academic mind" to the service of others.

Both the College hymn which the Choir sang, and the College prayer which we prayed earlier, point to this ideal of being, in the words of the College prayer, "equipped for service".

Our J C Bannon Oration this year was on volunteering, which is a form of service.

One member of the College who exemplified this ideal of service passed away on Wednesday, and it is fitting that we should remember him here today. I refer, of course, to Ian Wall AM.

You might never have met this man who did so much for every member of this College, but you have seen his portrait many times in our dining hall – the magnificent joint portrait with his wife Pamela, near where the lectern normally is.

As you may have read, Ian was a resident student at St Mark's from 1950 to 1954. Alongside his studies in electrical engineering, he immersed himself in College life, including serving on the College Club Committee for three years, including as Treasurer.

Ian went on to combine his passion for electronics with the personal and business skills he had gained when he and two friends just a few years later created an electronics company, now called Codan, that today operates around the world, from its base here in Adelaide, and has been valued in the billions of dollars.

As an innovating engineer and entrepreneur, Ian helped to create new communications and other equipment that, for example, has been used by United Nations and NGO operations around the world, and he has helped to create many, many jobs, including here in South Australia.

Having grown up in a family of modest means but generous spirit, Ian through time – through vision, sacrifice, and hard work – developed the financial capacity to help others in very significant ways. He became one of South Australia’s most significant philanthropists, helping very many organisations and institutions with his substantial donations.

Ian believed – he told me and others this many times – that he owed much – he sometimes said “all” - of his success in life to his years at St Mark’s. Grateful for what St Mark’s contributed to his life, Ian felt what he once called – and I quote - “almost a duty that you should reinforce the opportunity for those who are to follow in your steps”.

Giving practical expression to his gratitude to St Mark’s, and keen to help future generations of students here have the best opportunities they could, Ian became in time the largest donor in the history of the College. Without his and his wife Pammie’s generosity, we would not have all of the flats, nor East Wing – including the Ian and Pamela Wall Academic Centre, nor the carpark – and we owe to them much else as well.

Throughout it all, Ian remained a humble, decent, and generous man – truly living as the best version of himself and truly living a life of service.

The song that Bianca and Deni sang a few minutes ago, “A Million Dreams”, comes from the musical *The Greatest Showman*, which is about another person who built something hugely successful from scratch, P T Barnum, who helped create the Barnum & Bailey circus, billed as “the greatest show on earth”.

That song, “A Million Dreams”, encourages us to aspire to make a better world, and to believe that we can each do something special and each help to create something special in this world –

I think of what the world could be
A vision of the one I see
A million dreams is all it's gonna take
A million dreams for the world we're gonna make

Well, we don’t all have to create “the greatest show on earth”, or build a global electronics company and become an exceptional philanthropist.

But each of us can choose to make a difference – a difference for good - in the world, a greater difference for good than we might ever have imagined, and each of us can choose to be the best version of ourselves, better even than we might have imagined. And that is what I hope that you will choose to do and what you will choose to be – and I hope that St Mark's helps you do and be just that – the best version of yourself, using your “trained academic mind” to make a difference for good in the world.