

Address at the Final Service for St Mark's College
by the Head of College, Professor Don Markwell AM,
St Peter's Cathedral, Adelaide
Saturday 28 October 2023

Thank you so much, Gracie, Sadie, and Bianca for that very moving song.¹

After this beautiful service concludes, everyone is invited to drinks at the College, and I hope that you will join us if you can.

At 7 o'clock, the College bell will ring, and our students and staff will peel off to our Final Dinner, in which speeches will especially honour those who are leaving the College, and awards will be given marking the academic, sporting, community service, and other achievements and contributions of students.

At the end of the dinner, all our students and staff will, as is our practice, join in singing a song called "I don't want to miss a thing".

This song by Aerosmith contains the lines:

I could stay lost in this moment forever
Where a moment spent with you is a moment I treasure

As we sing those words, many of us will think of moments with fellow collegians at St Mark's that we will treasure, and I suspect that one or two tears of happy sadness will be shed, especially but not only by those for whom this will be their final Final Dinner.

I wonder what the moments are that you treasure. I suspect that very many of them relate to friendships – friendships formed living together in College, socialising together, eating meals together, playing sport together, studying together, procrastinating about study together, taking part in other activities together including maybe Arts Evenings or Battle of the Bands or Marksenfest or Charitable activities, or simply hanging out together.

As I look back on 2023 in College, I too will treasure moments of many kinds.

This year has seen the largest enrolment of students in the College's history, made possible in part through the College renting the Deanery from the Cathedral, to whom we are very grateful. Our enrolments for next year are also extraordinarily strong, and we are very fortunate that we will continue to have the Deanery as a home for St Mark's students.

¹ Gracie Rowland and Sadie Fuss sang "Daughter of a King" by Trailer Flowers, accompanied by Bianca Feher on guitar.

Despite this year having more students than ever before, St Mark's has remained a warm and friendly community. For that we owe much to the calibre and spirit of our students and to the superb work of our student leaders, who have done so much to support their fellow students – on their floors or in their flats, in their studies, in extra-curricular activities, through social activities, and in other ways.

We owe much also to the calibre of our staff – a remarkable team of outstanding individuals who do so much to provide academic and wellbeing support, advice and mentoring, to our students, as well as those who work for you behind the scenes. We are truly blessed to have, alongside other superb staff, Dr Katrina Stats as Director of Learning, Sally Cassidy as Director of Wellbeing, Dr Rachel Buxton as Adviser and Special Projects, Sara Ware as Business Manager, and Kathy Radoslovich on Research and Scholarships – and we have been delighted to welcome Stuart Meldrum back as Dean of the College.

Our students achieved excellent academic results in first semester, and I am sure will do well in this semester also.

Even though we did not achieve everything we set out to do, our students should be proud of having done very well in sport, including winning the tennis and the swimming at the start of the year. Our women's teams won the netball, football, and basketball. And just two weeks ago we won the athletics very convincingly. In every sport we played with passion and skill; and throughout the year we have maintained a high standard of good sportsmanship, which must always be our hallmark.

We were all delighted on Tuesday when one of our students, Oliver Douglas, was chosen as the Rhodes Scholar for South Australia for 2024 – the 30th Rhodes Scholar in our history. Rhodes Scholars are chosen on the basis of excellence in intellect, character, leadership, and service – all of which Oliver displays in high measure. The Scholarship will take him to the University of Oxford next academic year to undertake postgraduate study in history, and we congratulate him most warmly on this brilliant achievement.

Beginning with the student leadership retreat last year, our student leaders of 2023 have initiated and written the Living Document of Values to which the Rev'd Sally Sandford-Morgan has already referred in her sermon, for which we are very grateful, as we are grateful to her for taking this service, and to the Cathedral organist, David Heah, for playing for us.

At the start of this academic year, all of our students signed a pledge to uphold and live out the values in the Living Document of Values in their time at St Mark's and beyond. Our student leaders for next year, led by the Assistant Deans, will be custodians of reviewing and revising the Living Document for all the students of 2024.

If you haven't re-read the Living Document of Values recently, I recommend it to you. For those who haven't seen it, you can find it on the College website in the section on "Vision and Values".

Under each of the core values – as Sally mentioned, integrity, collegiality, respect, growth, and generosity – there is a description of what that value means in our life in College, and our students provided several examples of what that value looks like in practice.

Some of the aspects that struck me as I re-read the Living Document a few days ago were:

- the idea of “making the right choices when no one else is watching”,
- “leaving behind the ‘high school mentality’ of gossiping and rumour-spreading”, and
- “practising self-care and utilising College support”.

The Living Document says that “collegiality is demonstrated by” – amongst other things – “participating in practices that bring Collegians together”. It says that “singing ‘Don’t Want to Miss a Thing’ together is a special part of St Mark’s collegiality”, as we will see again tonight.

In the Living Document, our student leaders referred to “participating in healthy competition amongst other Colleges at intercollegiate events”. Our aim on and off the sporting field should be a healthy, friendly, respectful, and dignified rivalry, not an unhealthy one, even in the face of occasional provocation from others. Most of our students have previously heard me quote Michelle Obama, the former First Lady of the United States, say “when they go low, we go high” – and I think that’s something for all of us to remember.

The Living Document also speaks of using “what we have gained here to benefit the broader community, both while we are students here and once we have left”. This is very much in line with the vision of the founders of our College who wanted it to be a values-based community which would encourage commitment to serving the wider community, including through the application of what students learn in their studies to the benefit of others.

In the Living Document, our student leaders speak also of “finding ways to ‘pay it forward’ for the benefit of another Collegian”. You can “pay it forward” through acts of kindness to others whenever you can, both when you are at College and over the years to come. One aspect of this is remembering that the opportunity which you have at St Mark’s has been made possible through the labour and generosity of those who created the College and have built it up over the decades. For example, every one of our buildings has been built or bought through the generosity of others, and almost all of our scholarships are funded by donations. I hope that every Collegian, grateful for what you gain from your time at St Mark’s, will commit to “pay it forward” to help future generations of St Mark’s Collegians whenever you are able. And I would like to take this opportunity to thank most warmly the several people here today whose generous gifts help to support current and future Collegians in various ways.

One Old Collegian who has “paid it forward” to benefit current and future generations of Collegians is the Honourable Rod Matheson AM KC, who was a student at St Mark’s from 1948 to 1951, and later served as Chairman of the College Council from 1982 to 2000, for most of that time also as a Judge of the Supreme Court of South Australia. In recognition of his outstanding contribution to St Mark’s, his portrait has been painted this year for the College. It was unveiled yesterday where it now hangs in the Dining Hall behind the High Table.

Amongst much else, 2023 has seen increased preparation for marking the Centenary of the College in 2025. With the pandemic behind us, we have resumed overseas and interstate reunions of members of the St Mark's community, including to encourage as many as possible to join us for the Centenary celebrations; and we have appointed a Director of Centenary Engagement, Karin Dunsford, to help lead our Centenary efforts, including our Centenary appeal to increase our much-needed scholarship support for students.

Today and tonight, we look back with pride and heartfelt emotion on the achievements of 2023 and indeed on the achievements of every student throughout their time at St Mark's, and we treasure every moment together. And we also look ahead with optimism, including to celebrating the first 100 years of the College we love.

I hope that everybody here will join us in 2025 to celebrate the Centenary. You won't want to miss a thing!