

Principal's Speech on Speech Day 20th December, 2013 (extract)

Dear Dr Tsang, Distinguished Guests, Fathers, Parents, Alumni, Teachers, Friends and Graduates and Students,

This is a very special day, not because it is my first Speech Day as principal, but because it signifies the commencement of a new stage in the lives of our fresh graduates.

This is also the second (and hopefully the last) year in which we have an open air Speech Day in the playground because our Hall is still under construction, as you can see at the back. While the weather is rather cold, there is no rain. Of course there is still some discomfort – the cold weather, the lighting, the audio-visual facilities, the noise control, etc. However, when I reflected on this whole situation, I began to find the **special meanings** behind.

Firstly, the arrangements tonight will definitely be **memorable** – and years from now, when you have forgotten the feelings of cold and inconvenience, you'll still be talking about it with pride that you are one of only two cohorts of Wah Yan graduates who have had such a special experience on your special day.

Secondly, with the hall being under construction, and we having to endure some inconvenience – this whole state of affairs reminds us about **the process of growth and development itself**, which nearly always entails some pain and discomfort in the process. And being positive men who embrace continuous learning, growth and development, our lives are always under construction. In this sense, some inconvenience and pain are actually positive signs that we are growing out of our old self, our comfort zone.

Thirdly, the cold weather tonight is an apt signal to our graduates – Wah Yan is a warm and mutually supporting community. But you don't know what's going to happen outside. It may be similarly warm, or it may be cold, like tonight. So how can you keep yourself warm, and **where can you get the strength in the face of uncertainty and challenge?** Perhaps you could reach into your memory, go back to the

days in Wah Yan and recall the things you have learnt, the experiences you have gone through, the values you have acquired and the confidence you have gained here. Then, in the words of the French writer and philosopher Albert Camus, you can tell yourself that ***“in the midst of winter, there is within me, an invincible summer!”***

While I am delivering my speech on behalf of the school at your graduation, I myself have not played a part in your learning at Wah Yan as you have left before I assumed duty this year. So I tried to know more about you by reading about your achievements, talking to some of you personally, and even checking videos you’ve uploaded to youtube (such as those by the SA cabinet Nexus). The impression I got is very positive – you are all-rounded, friendly, polite, creative, confident and cheerful! What is more, I can see in you some of the qualities of a Jesuit graduate in terms of being academically competent, loving, religious and moral, as well as just. If you compare the person you see in your mirror tonight to the Form One boy six years ago (as captured in the class photo in the Star of 2008), you’ll be amazed by the enormous growth and development you have accomplished. This is no easy feat, and it is not possible without your own hard work. Neither would it be possible without the many people who have supported you one way or another – in particular your parents, teaching and non-teaching staff of Wah Yan and Old Boys. So taking the chance of this important occasion, I would like to thank them all for the wonderful work they have done to nurture you to become the gentlemen you are today.

2012/13 is a remarkable year for Wah Yan (as in many other years of the school). If you refer to the School Annual Report, you’ll notice the academic achievements as well as the many co-curricular achievements of our students in areas such as community service, sports, music, verse speaking, debate, drama, visual arts, subject-related competitions, chess, uniformed groups and many others. They are the results of the collaborative efforts of staff and students under the leadership of Mr Tam last year. As we celebrate our achievements, we should also reflect on these experiences: What have we done right to achieve them? What are the areas for improvement? How can we do better next time? Who else have contributed to our success?

I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge our deep gratitude to Wah Yan One Family Foundation, the WYHK Past Students Association and the Parent-Teacher Association WYHK for their immense support in 2012/2013 without which many of our academic and co-curricular initiatives would not be possible.

Finally, I would like to end my speech by sharing with you what one of our Wah Yan seniors told me in a gathering a few weeks ago. He is from **the Class of 1963** – so he is exactly 50 years your senior. In the gathering, he came up to me and said: “I was not good academically. But Fr Barrett told me that it's alright – just be an upright man. Fifty years have passed, and I would like to tell you this: ***I did it. I have been an upright man all these years.***”

I was immensely touched by his words. I think he intended those words for Fr Barrett himself – and I was merely receiving them on his behalf in my capacity as Principal – I’m sure Fr Barrett has heard him and is now smiling up there.

As for you, our fresh graduates, you will enter a much more complex world upon your graduation. You may encounter confusions, challenges, temptations, moments of weakness, even failures. You may encounter a weather which is even colder than tonight. But if you remember what you have learnt in Wah Yan, and the kind of person Wah Yan expects of you, then “*in the midst of winter, there [will be] within [you], an invincible summer!*” And 50 years from now [which is year 2063 to be exact], in the gathering of the Class of 2013, you would go up to the Principal then, paraphrasing our school song, and tell him (or her?) that:

"I did it! All my life, I have been worthy of Wah Yan!"

Thank you.