

Assembly Principal's Sharing (18/5/2016): Commitment – Be A Finisher

Today, I would like to show a video clip from the Olympics in Mexico in 1968. It was the very last event - the Marathon.

[Video] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wfeJAz3GI60>

This is not the story of the man who came first, but the man who came last. His name is John Stephen Akwhari of Tanzania. After 30 kilometers he did not feel well and fell to the ground. His leg was seriously hurt and officials urged him to retire, but he refused. With his knee bandaged Akwhari picked himself up and limped the rest of the race – 12 kilometers in total. An hour after the winner had finished Akwhari entered the stadium. Most of the spectators had gone home and only a handful were still there. Akwhari moved around the track at a slow pace – even though it was the best he could do, until finally he reached the finish line.

Afterwards, asked by a reporter why he had not dropped out, Akwhari said, "My country did not send me 5,000 miles to start the race. They sent me 5,000 miles to finish the race."

In the video, the narrator quoted this news report: "Today, we have seen a young African runner who symbolizes the finest of the human spirit. A performance that gives true dignity to the sport..."

You may recall that Fr Chow introduced to us the 4 "Cs" of Human Excellence. Which C does this story demonstrate? Yes, "commitment".

What is commitment? To quote Akwhari, you don't just start the race. You finish it, even if there are hurdles along the way. You don't quit even if you encounter difficulties.

Adults like to complain that young people today don't measure up. I try to defend our young whenever I can, reminding those who are complaining that they might have forgotten how inadequate they themselves had been when they were young. However, I fell silent when the complaint was about commitment because I feared that they might have a point.

Young people today do seem to have less commitment than those in the old days. We see inadequacies among young people in finishing homework, turning up for trainings and rehearsals, not to mention being punctual. Whether they be their

studies or their work, they tend to quit easily in the first instance of difficulty (or boredom).

Then there are all sorts of excuses to justify this lack of commitment. Well Akwhari had every legitimate reason (not "excuse") to quit. In fact the officials asked him not to continue. But he endured.

I know it is not easy. Life is a lot more comfortable today. Things are so convenient. Choices seem to be everywhere. So why stick to the promise and endure the hardship/boredom. Why not simply quit and find something easier/more exciting to do? But the moments of difficulties are exactly moments of truth, moments when we are called forth to show the true meaning of human dignity, honour, commitment and human excellence.

John Stephen Akwhari said: "My country did not send me 5,000 miles to start the race. It sent me 5,000 miles to finish the race." If we are touched by his words, it is because we come to realize how honourable his otherwise painful act was.

Speaking of finishing the race, do you know how many days are left before the school year finishes? [59] And how many are there before the final exam begins? [19]

If you have been a committed learner throughout the year, congratulations! Please keep up the good work and endure to the very end. If you have been a bit slacked, then this is your final chance this year to catch up, not just on your studies, but also on being better in your learning attitudes, your commitment. In fact, I see your commitment, your learning attitude to be equally important, if not more important than, your actual exam results because **your attitude is not just about this exam, but all exams, and not just exams, but the kind of person you are.** Hence, we have introduced the "unofficial feedback on learning attitudes" this year.

Forty-eight years have passed since the 1968 Olympics. Today, very few people can remember who was the fastest in that marathon race, but many are still talking about the one who was the most committed - John Stephen Akwhari of Tanzania.

So if you want to have a life with no regrets, then be like Akwhari, and...be committed... **be a Finisher...** in everything you do!

Thank you.