



## **Anglican Church Grammar School – Founder’s Day Service St John’s Cathedral Sunday, 11 February 2007, 6pm**

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### **The Hon Paul de Jersey AC Chief Justice of Queensland**

In the name of God, amen.

This is a momentous occasion. Why else would we be resorting so boldly to glamour; why else would we so proudly parade our tradition? That is precisely as it should be: glamour and tradition rightly excite us. But we must not allow them to mask reality.

This school is a large collection of uniquely individual people. If a school has significance – as does Churchie, in swathes – that comes from the distinction of each and every student.

That was certainly Canon Morris’s perspective. He was very proud of the school he founded in 1912. But I apprehend his real vision was not so much the corporate identity we so splendidly present tonight, or for that matter, to develop what we have, which is the finest school campus in Queensland. The founder’s vision was more humbly basic, while at the same time vastly more challenging: it was to introduce his boys to Christ.

So, boys, if you know Christ, and walk with Christ, even if you don’t talk about it much, you have secured the founder’s vision, a vision which fastens on each and every one of you.

The young men of Churchie are exposed to an astonishing raft of experiences. We have just heard the parable of the talents. It means simply this: don’t waste those opportunities. Foster your individual talent, though not for self-gratification. Christ says do it to help your fellow beings.

A thousand years before the birth of Christ, King Solomon ruled Israel for four decades. He built grand palaces, he captured large tracts of territory for the Israeli people. But putting that aside, what we are most often told about him, is that he was extremely wise. King Solomon’s expression of that wisdom can however be elliptical.



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One of his best known pieces of wisdom appears in this evening’s reading from Ecclesiastes, “a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven”. What did this wise king mean – a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven?

In the Churchie context, King Solomon would I think be saying: exploit all the remarkable opportunities confronting you, but choose the occasion carefully; and by that approach, build yourselves up as individual contributors to the betterment of others.

Yet King Solomon’s words cannot be taken literally, or can they?

To everything there is a season? No, there is no time, obviously, for dishonesty; there is no time for destructive personal behaviour – like the consumption of unlawful drugs; there is no time for “rage”, that increasingly disturbing 21<sup>st</sup> century phenomenon; there is no time for bullying the vulnerable, or oppressing anyone for that matter.

Yet there is always “time” to be sensitive to our comparative positions, to realize for example that we are not all luxuriously resourced by our parents, and to be careful not to cause hurt in our relations with others: be sensitive to the particular situations of all your colleagues.

Then what about war? Solomon, the commander, gloried in military exercises which secured the extension of his kingdom. These days, Israel and Iraq almost share a border. Only God comprehends whether the Iraqi war is justified. None of us knows. And putting it that way is not to ape Pontius Pilate, who when confronted by plain truth resorted to a fudging attempt at philosophy. A “time” for the Iraqi war? For present purposes, only I suggest for the obverse: in revealing the nobility of human valour, one man’s courage in tending to the relief of another. Jesus of Nazareth confronted a world of barbaric tyranny: he responded meekly, while not weakly. Jesus Christ, who is God, expects us to be strong: in Canon Morris’s hallowed words, to “finish hard”.



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Man-made disaster to natural disaster: had King Solomon experienced this Australian summer, would he have conceded a “time” for natural disaster? The answer I am sure is yes, not for the consequent destruction, but for what it teaches us about ourselves. Cardinal Pell said last December that there was a time for bush fires: to demonstrate, he said, that Christ is at work in the fire-fighters, though not in the bushfires they repel.

War...bushfire: let’s optimistically change tack for a brief moment: a “time” for Beckham style celebrity, that evanescent feature of modern life? Maybe, Solomon would say, but only so we may sift out the glam and come to identify true heroes, really worthwhile role models.

Speaking of role models, we focus this evening on leadership within the School. I said earlier the School is the aggregation of a large number of uniquely talented individuals. The coming year will be a “time” for inspiring leadership, directed to the development of those individual talents – again, for the ultimate betterment of us all. And I hope your leaders remember, throughout, the founder’s vision, which I know the headmaster shares.

May God bless you, young men, parents and teachers, Councillors, as you progress through another awesome school year, trying to be true to the founder’s ideal that you know and walk with Christ. And you will, if you depend on him for your personal fulfilment of those six values which define the cultural ethos of the school: humility, integrity, honesty, dignity, chivalry and loyalty. Then, you will truly minister to your fellow beings, while personally rising on wings like eagles – an experience which I suspect well and truly beats travelling in a Boeing 747.

I conclude with a few particularly compelling words from Solomon, which are in no sense cryptic. They are: “there is...a time to speak, and a time to be silent.” I have now reached that point.

Amen.