



Term 2 Assembly – Rector's Address

Mark Wilson

Friday 18 September 2026



Tēnā koutou katoa, nau mai, haere mai. A very warm welcome to you all.

It is always good when we are able to gather as a whole Secondary School. This is a very special assembly, an extra assembly, to capture and celebrate the remarkable achievements that have been achieved by so many of our young people and their teams over the last month. A warm welcome

to our parents and guests this morning who have joined us to celebrate the accomplishments of our young people.

Thank you to our new Board Chair, Nick Letham, who has just taken up this important role, after the retirement of Felicity Odlin after a wonderful five years as Board Chair and more than 10 years on the Board of Governors. A very warm welcome Nick and thank you for all your previous service and commitment to our College, and now as our new Board Chair.

Our assemblies are so often about celebrating accomplishments and many remarkable young people, and it is right and good that we do. During this assembly we will see some truly outstanding achievements across a range of different teams and groups.

Just some of these successes are:

- Our Pipe Band are not only once again National Champions, but this year won third place in the World Pipe Band Championships held in Glasgow – this result continues a remarkable consistent run of top three podium places on our last three visits to these championships.
- Our Girls' and Boys' basketball teams winning the regional championship title and then both went on to win the South Island Champions titles. A remarkable double for both our Girls' and Boys'.
- For our Girls' basketball team this regional win was a seventh consecutive year a stunning achievement for a school, considering the change of players on an annual basis.
- We wish both our Girls' and Boys' basketball team the very best as they head off to the national tournament in the upcoming term break.



- I'd also note the continued success of our basketball programme looks very positive for the future with our Junior Girls' basketball winning the South Island Championship this year.
- A shout out to our Year 9 netball team for their very impressive performance to claim the South Island Championship at their tournament earlier this term. Again, a great signal of talent for our netball future. This team's achievement was celebrated back in Week 3 of this term.
- In hockey, our Girls' 1st XI followed up on the second placing in last year's national tournament final with another podium finish this year, placing third in New Zealand. This year's result was also remarkable considering the young age of most of this team.
- Our Boys' 1st XV rugby team has had a stella season, first winning the regional Miles Toyota Premiership competition – for just the third time, having previously won this regional title back in 1986 and 1991. This year's win was the first time as a co-educational school.
- Our Boys' 1st XV then went on to win the South Island title with an incredible and composed win against Southland Boys' High School; qualifying them for the New Zealand Top Four Finals.
- At these national finals our boys stepped up yet again and showed outstanding character to win their semi-final and the grand final to become National Champions for the first time ever.
- I'd also like to acknowledge our Choir qualifying for the national Big Sing Finale for only the second time, the previous being back in 2004. In addition, this year they won, for the first time, a Silver Award for their excellent performance. We will hear more from our Choir shortly.

As you will see, today there are also many other outstanding team accomplishments we will celebrate and acknowledge. With all these achievements, and I would like to pause and reflect on what does all this winning means. These medals, awards and honours are so impressive and can be very alluring.

How do we achieve such successes? What do we mean about winning ? And what is most important in amongst all these shinning trophies?

I'd like to start with a short parable or story with a message to help explain what I believe is the most important message here today. This old parable speaks directly to the way we learn, train, and grow today...

A young archer once visited a Zen Master, confident in their extraordinary skill. To prove themself, the young archer drew their bow, released, and shot an arrow straight into the



centre of a distant target. Without hesitation, they shot a second arrow that split the first in half. The archer turned proudly to the Master, expecting high praise.

The old master, unmoved, nodded and led the young archer up into the mountains, to a deep chasm, that was spanned by a narrow, shaky log. Calmly, the master walked to centre of this log bridge across this chasm, and shot an arrow at a distant tree, and hit his mark before returning. The master then gestured for the archer to try.

But as the young archer looked into the abyss, their confidence faltered – their legs weak, hands trembling. As the archer stood peering over the edge, the wind blowing beneath their feet and their body trembling with fear, the young archer couldn't draw their bow.

The Master smiled gently and said, "You have great skill when conditions are perfect. But true mastery comes when you can remain steady, humble, and focused regardless of where you stand."

Now, this parable gives us three simple but powerful reminders:

Firstly, **humility keeps us growing.**

In our College, whether you're on the sports field, on stage, or in the classroom, humility is the key that keeps the door open to learning and growth. It allows you to listen, to adjust, and to absorb the wisdom of coaches, teachers, tutors, and teammates.

The best performers in any field are always learning. They don't say "I'm good enough." They say, "How can I do better tomorrow?"

The second message of this story is about understanding that **being ready to learn makes you stronger.**

When the young archer stood on the cliff, they encountered something new, fear. And the archer froze. The young archer had never trained for that moment. Being ready to learn, means accepting that you don't have everything figured out, and that every challenge is a chance to become better.

- In sports, it might be learning to adapt when the game plan changes.
- In performing arts, it might be adjusting to a different stage, a missed cue, or a technical mishap.
- In academic studies, it means being willing to ask questions, seek feedback, and try again after getting something wrong.

A ready and willing learner doesn't panic when things change – they adjust.

The third and final message of this story is **valuing the process over the outcome.**



The young archer focused on the target, on the result, on impressing the Master. But the Master looked instead at the archer's mindset, their breathing, their balance, their preparation – and their process. When we obsess over outcomes – scores, grades, winning, trophies – we can become blinded to the habits that actually create the success.

As coach Willi Heinz has said, one of the best things that happened to our Boys' 1st XV this season was their loss to St Bede's College in the start of the season. Our boys were humble enough to learn and grow from this loss. To reset back on their processes.

Greatness comes from the process:

- the hours of practice you commit to;
- the way you respond to a setback;
- the discipline you build;
- the mindset you bring every day.

If you focus on the process, the outcomes take care of themselves.

So, what does this mean for us as a school? It means we choose humility over pride. We choose curiosity over certainty. And we choose commitment over shortcuts. This is what is behind these successes we are celebrating today. Where our young people are coached, taught and supported to learn and grow towards mastery. Not obsessed with hitting the centre of the target in calm or easy conditions. But with perfecting our stance, calming our mind, and returning again, and again, changing our conditions and surroundings, applying patience and purpose.

The reason you go into tough arenas in life, is to be challenged to perform better. You cannot perform better, if you're not challenged. That is how we grow. That is how we excel. That is how we discover what we are truly capable of. That is when you truly become a winner.

This is why we are gathering here today to celebrate the achievements and successes of all these different students across such a wide range of activities. Students who have worked so hard, shown great dedication to their skill, had the humility to learn and grow and ultimately over time they have excelled. They have listened to and learnt from their Masters, and with humility they have developed their talents and skills. It is these processes our students have applied that we celebrate today.

So let us celebrate them.

No reira, Tēnā koutou, Tēnā koutou, Tēnā koutou katoa.