St Andrew's College

Term 4 Assembly – Rector's Address

Mark Wilson
Friday 30 October 2026



Morena koutou katoa, nau mai, haere mai.

A very warm welcome to our parents, families and whānau who have joined us this morning, as yet again, we have much to celebrate. I am also very pleased to welcome and thank our Board Chair, Mr Nick Letham, for his attendance, and his assistance in helping to present a number of certificates and awards.

Through this busy and hugely successful year, there is so much for us all to be grateful for.

This was acknowledged at last night's regional Zonta Sports Awards, in which St Andrew's College had 11 finalists across the six categories. We won four of these six categories and a High Distinction in another.

Driving factors in what helps motivates us all to work hard, and succeed in what we are doing, is often linked to our sense of purpose and joy. Today I would like to explore this idea of joy.

A few years ago, I read a wonderful book called *The Book of Joy*, based on conversations between Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the Dalai Lama. What fascinated me was that these were two people who had both experienced enormous challenges, suffering, and setbacks in life. Yet they spent their lives talking about joy.

That might seem strange. Many people assume joy comes when life is easy. When everything goes our way. But joy doesn't work like that. One of the central messages of the book is that joy is not found in a perfect life. Joy is found in how we choose to live, think, and respond to life. It's about having a joyful attitude or disposition.

Joy can often come from hard work and dedication, as working hard can give us a sense of purpose, progress, and achievement. When we work hard towards a goal, overcome challenges, and see progress it can bring great satisfaction, and joy. Challenges, sacrifices, failures or setbacks can all be difficult.

Yet overcoming or working through such difficulties actually makes the eventual success far more satisfying. The joy is not just in the outcome, but in seeing ourselves grow, improve, and achieve things we once thought were beyond us. Joy from hard work comes from knowing that growth has happened and that the achievement was earned.

In fact, the harder we have to work to achieve a goal, the more likely we are to value the outcome, and the greater the joy we will feel in such an accomplishment.

We then learn that dedication builds confidence, resilience, and character, and these qualities bring lasting fulfilment, that are often greater than the achievement itself.

When we achieve within a group, our sense of joy can be even more greatly enhanced. This is because positive relationships and a sense of belonging can provide a great and enduring source of joy. This is because, as humans, we are created to be social beings and we are created to live in community and have social connections.

For example, our sporting athletes can experience a unique joy being connected to a strong and positive team culture and seeing how they work together and grow together. Our performing artists who collaborate with other artists and creatives can get a greater sense of joy with the collective magic that can be collectively achieved and created.

This success and joy has been evident recently with our talented filmmakers and songwriters collaborating, and those in the cast and crew working together to create the stunning Middle School production, and our nationally successful Choir singing in such harmony.

Research also confirms our joy increases with when we focus less on ourselves and more on others. Almost all of us have experienced that moment when we have helped someone, encouraged a friend, supported a teammate, served our community, or simply made somebody smile.

As a Christian school, we believe that true joy comes from understanding that our lives have purpose beyond ourselves. This is why we emphasis the concept of servant leadership across our College. That is why our College places such value on community service.

This service is seen in supporting one another, contributing to our community, and looking beyond ourselves. The genuine joy from such service was clearly seen and experienced by those who engaged with our new feeding of the homeless community service this year.

It is about making a positive difference. From which joy is shared and spreads. Like a ripple in a pond, one act of generosity can influence many others.

Another key lesson from *The Book of Joy* is the importance of gratitude.

Gratitude is not pretending life is perfect. As you reflect on this year, there will undoubtedly be things that did not go according to plan. There may have been disappointments, challenges, frustrations, setbacks, or moments of failure. That is part of life.

But there have also been new friendships formed, opportunities taken, lessons learned, achievements earned, and people who have supported you along the way. The more we notice and appreciate these positive things, the more our joy grows.

Joy also requires looking after ourselves.

Sometimes we search for complicated solutions when the basics matter most: sleep, rest, time with family and friends, exercise, laughter, and moments away from our screens.

Even the most positive person will struggle to experience joy when they are exhausted, stressed, and running on empty. In these upcoming holidays, give yourself permission to recharge.

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So, after your hard work and final examinations, as you head into the holiday season, remember that joy is not something you wait for.

Joy is something you help create.

Joy is not simply about feeling good all the time.

Joy is often found and experienced on the other side of effort.

It's less about you and more about connecting with and serving others. Joy is also found in your purpose in life, which is why it's often connected with Christian faith. Joy is strongly connected to a gratitude mindset, the habit of intentionally noticing and appreciating the good things in life.

We can experience joy when we are in a place where we belong, can grow and flourish to make a positive difference in our world.

A place like St Andrew's College.

Understanding joy helps us move beyond seeking brief moments of happiness, to building a life of meaning, purpose, connection, and resilience.

Tēnā koutou katoa.