

**THE TRINITY COLLEGE PRIZE GIVING**  
**Address Delivered by**

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Reverend Bishop, Principal Mr. Rod Gilbert, Board of Governors,  
Distinguished Guests, Parents, Staff, and Old Boys ....and most  
importantly, the students of Trinity.

**The Principal has been more than generous** in his introductory  
comments about me. Honestly, I feel humbled by the honor  
bestowed on me today. I cannot express adequately how much I  
value this recognition.

May I **also express to the Principal and Staff** how much we  
appreciate your dedication to the school, recognizing these are not  
easy times. In particular, let me also say that being Principal of any  
school is fraught with challenges. I admire Principal Rod Gilbert's  
contribution and his patience in dealing with a multitude of  
challenges

**As I reflected on my being invited to this august assembly**, I  
said to myself, this is a blessing and an opportunity to publicly say  
**“Thank You”** to the School, inadequate as this may sound.

**Yes, I left the school nearly half a century ago.** To be precise, I stood on this very stage forty six years ago to make my Prize Day speech as the Senior Prefect. That means a whole generation ago. So, I feel pretty ancient and will not take offence if the young Trinitians sitting here name me after Samuel Coleridge's Ancient Mariner.

**On that occasion, the late Principal Cedric Oorloff,** was away in Africa from where he wrote to me saying that he was sorry to miss the occasion. He added that Prize Day was a **very special occasion** when the School **celebrates** the passing of another year in its history, its **achievements** and how it **faced challenges**. And it provides an **opportunity to define aspirations for the future.**

In his absence **Vice Principal,** the late G.Y. Sahayam took the chair. Mr. Sahayam was a terrific mathematician and a no-nonsense disciplinarian. I recall, as an aside, an assembly talk he made just before a **Bradby** Shield encounter. He urged our place kicker to remember the relationship between the Pythagoras' Square on the hypotenuse and Newtown's Law of Gravity! The lesson I drew from this is that to achieve our goals in life a sense of purpose and direction is important.

**This is all history** and it's not my intention to bore you with the past. But **history when seen in the rear view mirror** of your

vehicle provides an important **perspective for the journey forward**. So permit me also to recall that today's Prize day has **two historical significances**.

**The first is that it was one hundred years ago that the Colombo Old Boys' Association was inaugurated**. I am delighted that my very closet of friends, Himendra Ranaweera, is today the President of the Colombo OBA and is present here as a member of the Board of Governors. And Dr. Neil Halpe, who is also here, was my Senior Prefect, and is providing much leadership to the parent OBA.

**And second, it was exactly to this very day, a hundred years ago that the great Rev. Fraser announced the new directions for the school**. It was here that he, with courage, **embarked on transforming** what was regarded, by cynics, as an **"English School"** to a school that led a **balanced approach**. A school that should become relevant in the local context. In so expounding this vision, Fraser **broke ranks** from what was conventional thinking at that time that **English, Latin, Greek** mattered more than local languages...Sinhala and Tamil. He **raised eyebrows** that caused alarm and expressed, perhaps, feelings among cynics that this was another of Fraser's passing fantasies!

I would like today to **take advantage of these benchmarks** and reflect **first on the school** as an educational institution. And

**second**, the role of the **Student**, the **Staff** and, taken together, the **Old Boys and Parents**. A **Trinity of forces** that will not be pulled down by **gravity**.

It was another great Principal Rev Cannon McLeod **Campbell** who said that Trinity must be founded **on the rock of eternal truth**. Houses, he said, can also be built on the **shifting sands of popular opinion or as temporary structures**. But these will not last. The whole structure---and in this case Trinity-- must be formed as one **solid block that will stand the test of time**.

**Let me recount a story. There were three people who were busy chipping stone**. So we went to the first person and asked what you are doing? He said “I am chipping stone”. The second said, “I am laying stone on stone.” When the third person was asked, she paused to think, reflected for a while, and said “I am building a Chapel”!

**In our roles as Staff, as Parents, as Old Boys and as Students, are we only simply chipping at it?** Or are we, together, building a Chapel--- which in this case is **building Trinity, the School we are here to honour?**

**And what of the architecture of Trinity?** When Fraser spoke of bringing in an **indigenous—or local flavor** to the school—he meant the **broadening of our perspectives**. That **masterpiece** and beautiful College Chapel was one symbol. Yes the Country’s

educational system, led by Fraser's vision, brought in and **mainstreamed the local languages**, Sinhala and Tamil.

However, over the years, **English** in our educational system was **relegated** to basically a subject or to be kind, to second class status. **Is this what Fraser intended and hoped for?** I doubt it. He was trying to mould the Sri Lankan student as a composite local and global citizen.

**Let's pause a bit ....have we gone too far in our localisation, in a world that has rapidly globalised?**

The Nobel Prize Laureate Professor Amartya Sen recounts the parable in Sanskrit literature of the “*Kupamanduka*”. *Kupa* in Sanskrit means a “well”. *Maduka* means a “Frog”. The parable is the story of a frog which lives in a well. He has never been outside that well. His world view is entirely confined to that well. He considers it an intrusion if something new is brought into the well. And if new light is thrown outside the well or if he is fished out, he quickly jumps back into the well and is happy and content.

I dare say that in today's context of what is happening in the world, **there is a danger**—a great danger—of many of us becoming *Kupamandukas---frogs in a well!* How can we—whether we are staff or students—not become frogs in a well? How can we be more prepared as a school, to paraphrase Shakespeare,

*to take at the flood, the tide of globalization*

*so that it leads unto fortune?*

**When I talk of the well, I want to put it in the context of Globalization.** As we all know, because of the developments world over, there is a strong **inter-dependence** of countries in **whatever hemisphere** and within **whatever boundaries** they exist. A **new meaning** has been given to the concept of globalization. Simply put, it means **the end of geography**.

It's **no longer a capitalist concept**. It's a universally accepted **economic principle of survival**. It's not a political ideology. Nor **does it mean that everyone needs a foreign education**. It means that **our own education systems** need to recognize that whether we are in the urban or rural areas there is need **for inter-connectedness of ideas among our people to be put also in a global context**.

We live today in an **Information Society** where **knowledge and opportunities are connected regardless of where we live**. Our **educational systems** should therefore **underpin the knowledge society** that is defining what the world will be in the future.

For instance,

**It took 100 years** for the printing press to reach 100 million people

It took **40 years** for the Radio to reach 100 million people

It only took **4 years** for the Internet to reach 100 million people.

We therefore live in a society and world where there are **sweeping and breath-taking changes.**

**We cannot be left behind.**

**Information technology** is one such **example of transformation.**

One looks forward to the day when in **Trinity the entire school is networked and computers** are made available and used in the lower, middle and upper school. An **enabling environment** should also be that **all teachers**, without exception, should have orientation in the field of Information Technology.

**Access to Knowledge is access to success.**

With the **end of geography, the world is much smaller.** We have to **co-exist** in a multi-national, multi-lingual and multi-racial environment. In our own microcosm of Trinity, this exists and is a strength that the School shows. Perhaps the curriculum in Trinity should **be expanded to have in fuller measure** subjects and activities that will broaden the required understandings and knowledge that a **global citizen requires.**

**Knowledge is light. Light takes away darkness. If you think about it, even a single candle can overcome all the darkness in the world. St. Paul said that when darkness surrounds us, we need to walk as children of light. Each of the students of Trinity is a candle that illuminates a priceless chandelier that can be Trinity. One that provides not only academic study but when combined with a robust extra-curricular and sports program, feeds the mind and body. Attainment of academic qualification is but just one step in making men out of boys.**

The **founding fathers** of this school had **this at core of their thinking**. They envisioned a **parish** that provides **breadth and depth in learning**. And **parishioners**, if I may say so, who will distinguish themselves as good **citizens and gentlemen**.

**Indeed it was those young “gentleman” from Trinity’s Social Service Union** who the poor and the un-befriended in **Mahaiyawa and Watapuluwa** used to respectfully refer to as **“Tinty Colligiye Punchi Mahatthuru”**. To them the term Mahtatturu meant much, much more than a **courteous reference. Rather, it was reverence!**

We have talked about Trinity as a knowledge institution which provides light. Who **can pave the way to provide that light?**

First, it's **the Teacher**, of course!

There was a time when the **status of the Teacher** in the community was the **measure of that community's greatness**. Teachers look at teaching as a life's work ---God's own work. And the same **creator who names the stars** also knows the names of the dedicated teachers. **I spent a year on the staff of Trinity**. To this day, it remains one of the most satisfying periods in my career.

**But in a rapidly changing world, Teachers must have access to the storehouses of knowledge and human wisdom**. There is a **need to open the minds** of not only students, but very importantly, the minds of Teachers as well. **Minds are like parachutes....they only function when they are open**.

**Our teachers opened our minds and hearts**. The **School was their heart and their heart was the school**. They set the highest standards of discipline and helped us **drive away** those unclean and unclear things that lurk in the darkness.

At the same time **we live in a competitive society**. Teachers **cannot live by commitment and dedication alone**. To be realistic they need to be paid and **compensated well**. One valid **test** of a **school's survival power** is its ability to **reward and incentivize**

our staff. After all, **economic pressures should not be allowed to take its toll.** It's the square responsibility of the **Board of Governors, the School administration supported by Parents to recognize this.**

If we **want to be the Best School of All,** then we need to **attract the Best Teachers of All!** Its then that the **undivided** commitment of staff can be secured in these difficult times.

It was heartening to see recently that two of my beloved teachers were awarded the **General Lion** for the distinguished service they rendered to the School over half a century. In so recognizing Mr. Jeyraj and Mr. Ariasingham, an important signal was sent that Teachers are **really valued and recognized at Trinity.**

But there is **no better way** that I can provide an example of that love and commitment than that **of John,** who was a peon and messenger at the College office for many, many years. Way back in the sixties, when John died, they found under his pillow an envelope addressed to the Principal. It had a gift to the school. It was a **princely sum,** by the standards of that time, of a few hundred rupees. Perhaps his entire life's savings.

From the pillar of Teachers, Ladies and Gentleman, let me now move to the **pillar that Parents represent.**

I am reminded of the **young Trinitians** who really did not do a stroke of work in class. He was in what then was referred to as the **Practical Class**. This class was a haven for those who relished everything about Trinity but studies. The story goes that after the year end exam he sent a telegram to his mother saying

*“Failed all subjects. I got eight F’s. I may be sacked from School. Prepare father”.*

*Two days later the mother replied*

*“Father prepared. Prepare yourself. God help you”!*

**Education is the concern of parents.** They **entrust this to the School and in turn to the Teachers.** The Teachers hold this in Sacred Trust. Parents are **entitled to demand the highest standards** from those whom they entrust their children.

But in doing so they should equally **be prepared to support the discipline that Teachers enforce.** Parents, in turn should be **disciplined by not interfering with the School.** Their views and ideas can be **conveyed through the mechanism** of the Parent’s Teachers Association or where applicable through the Old Boys Association. These Associations are represented at the Board of

Governors and we should strictly use these channels and not resort in any way to interfering with the School.

Moving on to the **Pillar of Old Boys**.

Old Boys have an **emotional attachment**. This attachment is **unquestionably passionate**, as it should be. But at times it can be **intense**. At other times it can become **fierce**. It is then that some old boys give into the temptation where enthusiasm gets the better of them. They **lose sight of the Governance Structure**. The Governors in turn have **entrusted the running of the School to the Principal** who is accountable to the Board. The Board and the Principal take into account the feedback they receive and do take corrective action.

Regrettably though, there have **been a few instances where these channels have been by-passed** and there has even been recourse to the use of the media and e-mails to vent concerns. Doing so in the **public domain is a No, No! Its not cricket**, as the saying goes!

**Trinity is too sacred** a school to be **dragged into controversy**, if not dragged into the mud. When such recourse is taken, it **is a poor reflection** of the people who initiate this. Although this may be a handful of people, **public campaigns are clearly not a substitute for using the Governance structure that exists**. Those who resort to such measures **undermine the very structure that they think they want to protect**.

While I say this with much pain, I want **nothing to detract from the tremendous contribution made by Old Boys** and the Old Boys Associations, which includes the OBA branch in Washington of which I am a part. The fact that the **Colombo OBA, where I am also a member, will celebrate an unblemished century of commitment** to the School is a living testament in itself of what the **School means to the Old Boys and what Old Boys mean to the School.**

And finally we come to **the pillar that the present boys** of Trinity represent.

This is a **school with a tradition and a history that ranks at the top** of Schools and institutions in the country. We **need to thank our parents** for the efforts they have made to give us the privilege of being at Trinity. There are times **we take this opportunity for granted.** We do **not often appreciate how fortunate we are** and the sacrifices our parents made.

I am reminded of the **Chinese proverb:**

*“I cried because I had no shoes, but then I saw a man who had no feet”.*

We need therefore, as **Old Boys and Students, to count our blessings;** bless our parents for the opportunity given us; and bless the School for what it gives us.

**Boys in Trinity are a unified group** with far more in common than the differences which may separate us. Yes **we are different**; there are artists, the scholars, the techno-geeks, the sportsmen and an array **of students with different talents**. The bonds of Trinity unify us. We find ways to reach out to one another and **respect the differences among us and value each other's uniqueness**.

**Trinity afforded me the opportunity to dream bigger dreams for myself than I imagined**. Much as the Principal has referred to my so called achievements, I can say that I scraped through my O Level exams; I failed my A-level exams twice; and I struggled through my Chartered Accountancy exams, having failed the finals a few times!

But I **pressed ahead in the spirit** of our **unyielding motto**  
*“Respice Finem.”*

**Failure and success are two sides of a coin**. As we **flip it**, the spirit of Trinity helps us, in **Kipling's** words

*To meet triumph and disaster  
And treat these two imposters just the same.*

I can truly say that **my upbringing** in School, the time I spent as a **day scholar at Lemuel**, the finishing touches I got as a **boarder**

**at Ryde House**, compulsory sports programs we attended and enjoyed, the **numerous school societies** that I participated in, especially the **Social Service Union**, all **stood me in great stead**.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Today, we live in times where we have seen **destruction and loss of life in huge proportions** over the years as a result of the recent conflict. Several of our **own brothers and sisters** have been the victims. The **losses of lives** we suffer through conflict have, alas, **become so routine** that one takes the loss of life as a passing matter.

I think it was **Stalin** who said that that the **death of one person is a tragedy, but the death of a thousand persons is a statistic**. But Stalin was a bad man!

**What purpose would our learning and education have if we accepted the tragedies wrought by the ethnic conflict as a mere statistic!**

Our **education and upbringing in this beautiful School gives us the ammunition** to fight the prevalence of crime, ethnic conflict, corruption, poverty, violence, drug addiction and so on.

As today we **pass on the torch** to yet another generation of Trinitarians we come to the really hard question.

Who is going to **define the future**?

Who among us will build **the school to be the Best**?

How will **the traditions** of Trinity be respected, **enhanced, and invigorated**?

The answer lies in a **story**...

It's the story of some mischievous young boys who set out to embarrass the village wise man.

They wanted to prove that *Siyya*, the village elder, was just as foolish as all others. They went to him. One boy held a small bird, cupped in his hands, behind his back.

And they were to ask whether the bird was dead or alive? If the wise man said it was dead, he would let the bird fly; if he said it was alive, he'd wring its neck and kill it.

One way or another, the wise old man had to lose.

“*Siyya* “they asked “is the bird dead or alive?”.

The boy was getting ready to let the bird fly or wring its neck and kill it depending on the answer.

*Siyya*, the old man wise man looked at the boys in the eye. He reflected for a while and said firmly:

” *That Power Is In Your Hands*”.

Students of Trinity,

Who will make Trinity **the the land of youth and dream?**

Who will make **the last charge go thundering towards the twilight goal?**

And who will **honour yet the school we knew and make it the Best School of all?**

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Let me be *Siyya*, that old man from the village, and respond to the question and tell you:

***That Power Is In Your Hands.***

