

Good evening The Right Reverend Rennis Ponniah, our Guest-of-Honour for this evening's College Day, board of governors, our principal Mr Mark Lo, deputy principals, distinguished guests, parents, teachers and my fellow Saints.

To start off, I would like to thank the school for choosing me to be the Valedictorian for the class of 2017. I am grateful to address the school on behalf of our batch.

This year's theme for College Day is Making Lives, Waking Hearts. Yes, it is a time for us to dream big! To fulfill our passions, our goals, to serve and bring glory to the people around us. It is important for us to live by that. That's why we are here today. Every one of you has worked extremely hard, displaying your excellence and passion in whatever you have done. All of you deserve to be here receiving your awards, be it for your academic results, your CCA or school contributions. So yes, congratulations to all the prize recipients today!

It's feels good to be back here. I really do miss all the familiar faces I see daily, be it my classmates, teachers, or even the canteen stall vendors. To the class of 2017, right now, all of us are in our different paths in life. Some of us about to enter our universities while some of us, like me, are currently serving our country. But I want you to remember two and a half years ago, on 29th January 2016, when we entered SAJC for the first time. Some of you came in groups, some alone, but I am sure most of us experienced the same feelings as we stepped through the school gates. Uncertainty and confusion of what would lay ahead of us in the next 2 years.

I was no different. Lost and confused. I had heard stories from my seniors on how the JC life would be a big and sudden change in environment as compared to life in secondary school. That made me worried that I could not adapt to this. But over the orientation period, the Orientation Group Leaders made us feel very comfortable with their warmth and enthusiasm. My orientation group mates and classmates opened up easily. Before we knew it, we connected with the same spirit. The SA spirit.

Life in SAJC (may edit) is not a bed of roses. There are many difficulties we will face. The sheer amount of content and skills that we need to master in one and a half years result in us spending a great deal of time rushing through homework and revising for all our examinations. On top of it, we have to shoulder responsibilities and assume leadership positions in our CCAs. Handling all of this, while still trying to make time for our family and friends, is certainly not that simple.

Thus, personally, being in the Student Council was not an easy task. I was given the opportunity to serve the school and was also in the executive committee. Therefore, the workload needed large amounts of time. I remember I had to submit a proposal for Teachers' Day and EOM for Project Work in the same week. I was physically and mentally exhausted to meet the academic demands and CCA commitments. During the orientation period in 2017, being an Orientation Group Leader meant that we would miss multiple days of lessons. Trying to catch up with syllabus proved to be a challenge for many of us. It may sound tough, (pause) **but** I would gladly do it again.

This is because seeing the new J1s in my Orientation and Class Group smiling and enjoying themselves made me realise that we had impacted them the same way as I had been impacted in the previous year. It's just the same for other CCAs. Whether we were preparing for A Divisions or the Singapore Youth Festival or a school performance, there were countless vigorous training sessions. We faced immense fatigue. We struggled to keep up with the school's curriculum. It was a daunting task, but all of us remember the actual day when we fight hard in our competitions or put up a fantastic show. We brought glory to our school and made the school proud.

We must not forget the teammates that journeyed with us through these experiences. They are the **brothers and sisters** who will fight on the field with you, who will showcase their talents alongside you and all of you will serve the school together. They will be your pillars of strength when you are completely beaten. They will cheer as you compete with other schools on the fields. They will applaud for your performances. This, my friends, is where the SA spirit truly lies. We are a family unbroken.

To the prize recipients, we have done our best to make this school proud. But our achievements and successes today would not have been made possible if not for the support from this big family. I believe that their efforts should be recognised and appreciated as well.

First, to the teachers. It's definitely safe to say that none of us would have made it this far without them. Many of us may complain about their constant nagging and scolding, but we need to remember that they do this out of care and passion for us to do well in our A Levels. What heartened me most was seeing teachers who went beyond the call of their duty: sacrificing their breaks just to provide consultations to us or staying back to give extra remedials to weaker students. I was blessed to have such inspiring teachers. I remember Mr Zheng coaching the weaker students at night with his SuperFun sessions, Mr Stanley Ong with his endless words of wisdom, Mr Randy who always boosts our confidence by reminding us to believe in ourselves, Mr Ching who stayed up to perfect our written reports, Mr Chung, who saw my potential and pushed me to strive further even when I did not believe in myself. There are many things that teachers do which we unfortunately fail to notice. And I think the amount of care and love the teachers have shown in SA is something worth praising.

Then we have our friends and classmates, whom we see for 5 days a week. Those who sit through the same lessons with us, or those whom we see in between breaks to catch up, or those whom we meet after school to study or hang out together. These were the people that brought a smile to my face on bad days and kept me going. I would like to thank my friends in 16S15 whom I look forward to seeing everyday. Thank you for celebrating with me at my highs and pulling me back up at my lows. I am sure all of us have that friends whom we can count on, those that will always be there to support us. But in SAJC, even the random Saints we see along the corridors or people sitting beside you right now would do the same because we are all part of the same community. We are there for each other in one way or another.

I would also like to thank the mentors for supporting us spiritually when we need them, for always giving us sweets and snacks to keep us going in lessons, for giving us strength to push on. Thank you for your generosity, hospitality and warmth towards the Saints.

And then we have the non-teaching staff to be grateful for, without whom the school would not function the way it does. Because of them, we have food to energise us during breaks and after school hours. Because of them, we have clean toilets and floor. Because of them, we have printed notes for revision. Because of them, we have an air-conditioned and conducive place to revise. Because of them, we are in a safe and secure environment to study til late at night. Thank you for the sacrifice you have made so that Saints can learn in a comfortable and conducive environment.

Let's not forget our parents, the ones who have been there from the day we were born, the ones who have constantly loved and supported us in our choices. Thank you for the countless sacrifices you have made for us, for understanding our failures and praising our successes. I am very grateful for my parents, who always make an effort to see me achieve my goals. I hope we do not forget their sacrifices amidst the stress of studies and other commitments.

To the board of governors and the school leaders, thank you for always working hard to make this school a better place. Without your support, we would not be sitting here comfortably today.

But ultimately, I would like to thank God for without him, everything in our lives right now would not have been made possible. He has blessed us with all this people whom we call family, whom we can count on to keep the school and the SA spirit alive.

To the current J2s, I understand that the stress is building up tremendously right now, with A Levels lurking around the corner. But no matter what your circumstances are, don't give up on yourself. Even when things may not seem to work out at this moment, miracles can happen. Also, remember that your friends and teachers are there to help you reach the end goal together. Always have faith in yourself because everyone of us has the potential and capability to do well in A Levels, so long as we have the perseverance. Now is also the time for you to treasure your friends, be there for them and fight this battle hard together.

To the J1s, you have a long journey still ahead of you. Sooner or later, you will succeed the J2s to be the leaders of your CCAs, to be the seniors of the school to lead and welcome the next batch of J1s. I hope at this point, you have seen the SA family being there to support you in whatever you do. Do not worry. While the journey may seem arduous, you are going through this with your teachers and friends. Appreciate your time together, support your friends whenever they need it. Take this time to discover more about yourself and those around you.

Lastly, to the class of 2017, thank you very much for the blessed 2 years. No matter what your experience in SAJC was like, never forget how you managed to reach where you are today. This school played an important role in supporting us. More importantly, never forget the friends you have made here. The friendships you have forged are real. Down the road, as you get to

know more people, try to set aside time to catch up with your close friends here. They were the ones who got you through your trials and tribulations, so never lose them. Even when life becomes even more challenging, have faith in yourself and your friends because together, you can overcome any challenges.

I think it's safe to say that people from the SAJC family are capable of excellence. We are capable of making lives, waking hearts. You may not remember the mathematical formulas or history facts after you leave this place, but what you can bring forward to your future are the values that this school has imparted. Being wise. Being true. But most importantly, being a servant leader. So in conclusion, thank you SAJC for providing us with 2 amazing and unforgettable years of our lives. And remember, our stories do not end here. Continue to wake the hearts of those around you, all in the name of God. Up and On!