



Rector's Address and Prayer -- Walk for Dignity

Dr Tim Nuttall
Cheetah Slopes in front of St Stithians College Chapel
11 September 2019

Thank you, One and All, for participating in today's Walk for Dignity.

Our Walk has taken us around the Saints Ring Road, with schools joining the Walk as the procession reached each school. We started at the Boy's College, moved to the Girls' College, then were joined by the Girls' Prep and the Boys' Prep and, for the last part, by the Junior Prep. The Walk has ended with us gathered here on the Cheetah Slopes in front of the College Chapel, the spiritual heartland of our campus.

We are here from the Grade Rs to the Grade 11s, the Matrics are writing exams. We are here as the staff, parents and alumni of Saints. What I say below takes into account the age spectrum of our students, so far as I can.

The Bill of Rights in the South African Constitution states:
"Everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected."

The word dignity speaks to us of the worth, well-being and value of each individual. An individual with dignity is someone who has a sense of self-worth, self-respect and empowerment. A person with dignity can stand tall and be him or herself. A person with dignity can treat others with dignity.

God loves each one of us for who we are. God wants us to love one another.

The violence in our society – the hurting and killing of people – represents the loss of dignity, the absence of dignity, the destruction of dignity. This is so for the victims and the perpetrators, the people who experience violence and the people who act violently.

Today we have walked around our beautiful campus. We have done so in unity as the family of Saints. We have done so to take a stand against violence in our society. We have done so to express solidarity with the victims of violence, with the families in our land who have lost loved ones.

When we think of the violence: We are sad. We are angry. We are fearful. We are dressed in black to represent these emotions.

We think today especially of women in South African society. We know that in our society many, many girls and women are often unsafe, are not treated with dignity, experience violence and hurt, are abused and murdered.

INSPIRING EXCELLENCE. MAKING A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

We want girls and women to be able to live with dignity, to feel safe, to stand tall.
We want boys and men to be able to live with dignity, to feel safe, to stand tall.
We want this for our girls and boys, our women and men, at St Stithians, in our families.
We want this for all who live in this beautiful land.

Today we think also of immigrants from other African countries, and some countries beyond Africa, who have been attacked and killed. Property has been destroyed.
As a proudly South African school we are a proudly African school – we welcome and embrace students and families from many African countries. We are saddened and angered by the xenophobia and attacks on African immigrants.

Let us say, as St Stithians, 'we are one'. One and All.
We pledge to live by the Fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

We say:
Yes, to our common humanity as Africans, people of this continent.
Yes, to peace, to love and compassion
Yes, to dignity and respect among men and women

Today, we have taken this public stand. We will continue to talk about and engage in these important matters – in our classrooms, in assemblies and chapel services.

Let us pray:
Living God, we pray to you as the community of St Stithians.
May you strengthen and comfort all who mourn
For loved ones who have died through violence in our land.
We pray for all girls and women
We pray for all boys and men in our country.
We pray for all who work to stop the violence.
We pray for healing
We pray for love
We pray for dignity.
Amen

I now ring this school bell 66 times, representing the age of St Stithians. Around the world, human communities ring a bell, beat a drum or make music at times of happiness and times of sadness. I ring this bell to represent our emotions as we mourn for all those affected by the violence in our society. On the Walk I reflected on the energy, life and hope that lives in our young people and the opportunities we have at St Stithians to educate each new generation. Let us continue to be a school which nurtures each student in our care, while engaging with the society of which we are a part.