

Some years ago, a new boy at The King's School Canterbury is said to have written to his parents very much excited about his new life and giving full account of his new school. He concluded, with much pride, by announcing, just in case they did not already know, and we have a cathedral in our grounds!

When Augustine landed in Kent in 597 with his monks, he founded a church, a monastery and a school.

We stand within a long tradition of church schools, a tradition going back further than the House of Commons, the universities and some say the Throne itself. That tradition speaks to us from the stones set in the walls of the cloisters.

We do not have a cathedral in our grounds. We have this rather lovely and special place. Yet, I doubt that many new boys will write, email or add to their facebook their excitement in having a chapel in the grounds of their new school. There may be some of us here for whom it is not the high point of your vocation as an educator.

But it is here, and it stands in that great tradition of schools that choose to differ from other forms of schooling, in their dedication to the proposition that education cannot, in its fullest sense be secular; that education of the whole person cannot ignore what we tend to call the spiritual.

So this is where we start. The beginning, as Eliot said, is where we start from.

My father-in-law and I used to present ourselves every year to the first day of the Sydney test match on Boxing Day, before that heretical decision that took it to Melbourne. He was obsessive about being in place, at the top of the Bradman Stand, to observe the first ball of the match. He would claim to be able to deduce or infer the pattern of play that would follow in the succeeding days from this ball and the rest of the over.

How we start, in my view, matters. It colours and sets the tone for what will follow. It is an acknowledgement that all we do here has the one source, the one inspiration. All we are, all we have, our gifts, abilities and our purpose is God-given. We are, like it or not creatures of the fount of all wisdom. All we know, or claim to know or don't know lies within the grain of that creation, the creation of the one without whom not anything was made that was made.

Yes, we discover and exploit and apply knowledge in all its rich complexity. But we do not create.

And all human life is there. I read in the Red Hill outlook that "Our school is our people". And we here remind ourselves that all education is relational, something brought home to me last week when I sat for the first time in the midst of the Grammar community at the Memorial Service for Anne Gisz. It was strange to be at a celebration of a life I had not known, but feeling when I left as if I had. It reveals and amplifies the influence of one loving soul upon another, upon many others.

The reading today is the one chosen for Anne's Service last week. It seemed fitting to carry that encouragement into the work ahead of us. The reading reminds us of the

kind of relationship to which we are called. It is one of love, patience, perseverance, mutuality, passion for noble things, zeal without zealotry; one where we rejoice and celebrate together, and where we weep together.

Like CGS, the Christian life is one of relationship, not rules and edicts. To corrupt Hamlet, the essential question of our life is to be *with* or not to be *with*. Jesus gave us two commands, which really are both faces of the one coin. Love God and love our neighbour. That's pretty relational. All we do flows from that.

It is in relationship, in being with, that we create and find identity. Cast away on a desert island, there is the need to find a mate, even if it is a basketball called Wilson. We are not much on our own.

And here we are, then, at the beginning of another year. Our work, our relationships start here.

But there is something missing. The relationship is far from complete. I have been a teacher for quite a few decades and there is always a sense of purposelessness in that strange time before term starts – day minus one, or day minus five. Nothing we do seems to make much sense. Being here in the last ten days or so hasn't been very different from my previous experience. Then the students return and the context of the relationship seems complete. It is a reminder, a healthy one I trust, of why we are here.

Yes, it is part of our work to encourage, challenge, stimulate, support and prod each other but the boys, and, for some of us, the girls too, are our purpose and our reward. There is no greater work.

And the work begins here, in this place among the roots of our being and of our purpose in life. This is a place of prayer and reflection; it is a place of joyous noise-making. It is a place of celebration, of welcome and farewell, of great sadness and mourning. It is a place to give thanks and to peer into the depths of our brokenness in our search for newness of life. It is the outward and visible sign of all our life together is and should be.

This is not an appurtenance, an accessory. It is the heart of our being. Now and then, as you go about your day's business, you may hear the bell ring. Let it remind you that the school is praying; that there is a candle burning as a signification of constant prayer and the constant presence of God, not just here, but wherever you and I find ourselves

We go out from here, not leaving behind what we have done, but taking it with us. And we shall all, I hope, return now and then to be recharged and refreshed or just to be still. No, we do not have a cathedral in our grounds. I don't think we have a chapel in the grounds of our school. I like to think that we have a school in the grounds of our chapel. And that is something to write home about.