

Life is a gift from God. It is not our job to organize our own death. To be accepted in the church as an official martyr, it has to be proved that the person did not look for death but was ready to die when the call came. He or she was a normal and healthy person who loved life.

We, who may not be so ready to die, give thanks for such examples, pray for their souls and pray for guidance as to what WE should do to make the world a better place by doing what we can to confront evil and to know what to do if WE are faced with difficult challenges and choices. God bless you.



LIFE – THE UPHILL WALK

Assembly 29. February 25th 2003.

It gives me great pleasure to announce that our sports department is developing. The swimming season is here and you are invited to sign up for Friday and Saturday swimming. Also, our Sports teacher has now got his certificate as a handball coach so we are offering both boys and girls this extra sport, also at the weekends, for no extra charge! There are very few opportunities for girls in sport in Dhaka and handball is very suitable for women. Most of us need exercise so please make use of these opportunities.

We have been thinking this week of the martyrs, the witnesses – those whose lives were offered up because they faced up to evil and did not run away. This is all part of the bigger subject of ‘sacrifice’ – the hurt and hardship it takes to achieve anything in life. Most of you know this already. You do not get any satisfaction out of your studies unless you put your heart and mind into them – and, even if it is boring to begin with, once you get into a good work routine, your studies become much more interesting. Many of you have surely worked out that you cannot

enjoy anything, from a hobby to a relationship, unless you give it some time and discipline.

Being rich does not protect us from the ways life can be difficult. In both rich families and in poor families, people fall ill and die – people you love very much. Rich and poor alike have accidents, their relationships fail, and some members of the family bring disgrace to it. Money can buy a certain amount of comfort but cannot protect anyone from suffering - from having to face the hard fact that *life is difficult*.

‘Life is difficult’. This was the opening sentence in a book that has had a great influence. It was written by an American about 40 years ago but it has been read all over the world. It is called ‘The Road Less Traveled.’ In it, the author, M Scott Peck, warns that, if you believe that life is, or should be, easy, then you get the wrong ideas. He says that living your life responsibly and well is like walking uphill. If you give up and start walking downhill then you find, very soon, that you are in a mess. He says that sin is, basically, laziness. If we refuse to accept that life is difficult, we will be always moaning and complaining about every difficulty, blaming others when things go wrong and refusing to accept responsibility for what we can do ourselves. Life is difficult and, because of this, a good home and school will send you out into the world, with the sort of skills and character that will mean that you can manage.

Sometimes people talk to me and ask if I can help them to get a visa for England. The way they talk, and the stars in their eyes, tell me that they think that there life will be easy, the streets will be paved with gold and someone is waiting to put money into their hands! I usually inform them that they do NOT want to go to England – that it is very cold, very expensive and that there is a lot of “Bye ‘Bye!” Jobs are difficult to get and even more difficult to keep. If you do not do your job well, if you do not reach your targets – then “Bye ‘Bye.” Life is difficult in every country – it is just difficult in different ways. No country is easy.

The fact that one of my family members had plenty of money did not protect him from the heart-ache of having a son who became a drug addict.

So, all over the world, people are walking uphill, facing lives that are difficult. Some lives are much more difficult than others, I know. I think of parts of Africa with no rain and an estimated 11 million children who have no father and mother because the HIV/AIDS epidemic has taken around 25% of the young adult population. Bangladesh is rich compared to parts of Africa at the moment. You and I are so lucky to have enough to eat and health care and people to care for us. We are being strengthened for the journey of life that lies ahead of us, where the road to responsible living will be uphill for much of the way. But, if you and I live responsibly, the world will become a better place. God bless you.



THE DREAM OF A GROUP OF ARTISTS BECOMES AN ART EXHIBITION HERE!

Assembly 30 – February 26th 2003

We have been thinking this week of the martyrs, the witnesses, the people who remind us that nothing that is truly great happens without sacrifice. Life is difficult and we need people who say, “Yes, OK. It is difficult, but it is not impossible – so we shall do it!”

We think of the founding of this school which began with a dream in the heads of a small group of people – and here we are, 3 years later – not perfect but working at it and with a lot to be proud of.

A few years ago, a group of artists had the dream of taking really good works of art and exhibiting them in schools round Dhaka. In some ways, it was a crazy idea. Good paintings are

worth a great deal of money. Was it not too risky? But this group of artists said, “We must give men and women, boys and girls, the chance to see and appreciate real works of art. We can do it!” And they did! It is our pleasure and our privilege to be host to this wonderful exhibition for the next few days. Lots of people will be coming in and climbing our stairs to the exhibition. Please be very polite with our visitors. Smile at them and say welcome and behave well on the stairs.

The exhibition will be opened at 11.00am this morning by a famous artist – Mustafa Monwar. You too will have an opportunity to see the exhibition in your Art classes and, as you look at it, remember what a lot of hard work and organising has gone into it but how much we appreciate it. As always, the more you put into life, the more you, and others, can get out of it.

God bless you.



IDENTITY DISKS – WHO WANTS A LABEL?

Assembly 31 – February 31st 2003

I think that the office has now given most of us our identity disks to hang round our necks. They are very smart. But when I was given mine, I had mixed feelings. There was a voice inside me that said, “Why do I need a label? I am not a parcel!” But I thought about it and realised there are many reasons why we have our identity labels. Can you think of any?

Intruders! The school guards must have a way of identifying you for when you are collected. Sometimes, when I go off on my own into the streets of Dhaka, I wear my label in case I am in an accident. I have had a rickshaw accident, a baby taxi accident and a car accident, since I have been in Bangladesh so I know the roads are not safe.