

centres offer is not as good as *many* schools. For some universities overseas, if you have only been to a coaching centre, you have to spend a year doing an extra foundation course because they know that most coaches only cram you through the exam and do not teach you the learning skills you will need for university.

I am sorry that there seems to be no way that schools and coaching centres can work together. Our interests are quite different. In school, we are trying to give you an all-round day-time education and work, along with your parents, to care about your total development as a person. Most coaching centers are run on the belief that education is only about passing the next exam – and if you pay them enough, you think that you will pass. Please think very hard before you and your parents think you need extra coaching. If you want to do extra homework in a subject and more revision, then talk to your teachers here and I am sure they will be able to suggest something. We want to help you all we can so that every day can be well-balanced for you between school and home, work and play, concentration and relaxation. We believe that this is ‘education for life’. God bless you.



“LOWER YOUR GUNS – AND SMILE!”

Assembly 73. May 19th 2003

Let us continue to think of teamwork. Teamwork is sometimes very difficult. Some people do not want to be part of a team – they do not want to work with others. Sometimes they are suspicious of others. It can be very hard to develop trust between members of a team, in sport, in education, in a business – and there are very sad times when you find that someone you thought you could trust, is untrustworthy.

Like many of you I have been following the events in the Iraq War with very mixed feelings. Was it a good idea for Saddam Hussein, a very wicked leader, to be defeated like that or would it have been better to leave him alone? I don’t know but I want to share just one story from the war that I think is very interesting. I heard it just once and I do not know all the details. The story is that some American soldiers of the 101st airborne division under their Colonel Christopher Hughes, were entering the town of Najaf after the fall of Saddam Hussein. A crowd of Shia Muslims, angered by the presence of troops near a mosque started to advance towards the soldiers looking threatening. The soldiers did not know what to do. Their Colonel gave them a very strange order, “Lower your guns and smile!” Do you understand? Their guns were raised. The situation was very dangerous. Many people could have got killed. But the soldiers were told not to fire but to lower their guns and to smile.

It worked. Everyone relaxed. By lowering their guns and smiling, the soldiers were saying, “We are not fighting you – only your corrupt and wicked government. This war is not about Christians versus Muslims, or Americans and British against Iraqis. We all want the same thing – for Iraq to be a better country, a more free country. Let us not fight one another. Let us work together.” The crowd were so surprised by soldiers who behaved in such a friendly way to them that they accompanied them back to their base, congratulating them on having brought down Saddam Hussein and his Ba’athist regime whom they hated also. I feel very glad that American soldiers behaved in that way. I wonder how many other armies in the world would have done that. Can you imagine the Pakistani army doing that in the Liberation War? “Lower your guns and smile!” ?

It is very easy for us to see other people as our enemies or our competitors but, surely, we are all together in this world, trying to be better people in a better world. It is good to remind people that life is not ONLY about competition. Even in competition, we

must play fair. We must not try and work to build up feelings of hatred and think that other people are out to get us. Even if they ARE out to get us, they too are human and may, perhaps, be persuaded to behave differently. I am happy that one group of British soldiers have now gone home from Iraq because the town they were occupying is now in the control of its own townspeople who are soon going to have the first democratic elections for 37 years, to elect their own town government. It is the first and only town so far to do this, but we hope that, slowly, the whole of Iraq will be self-governing as soon as possible so all the soldiers can pack their guns away and go home.

It is very important that a country has an army that knows how to fight – but only as little as possible and only because it is sometimes the only way to overthrow evil leaders and bring peace. There have been just a few countries in the world where it has been possible to overthrow a bad government without the use of any violence at all and that must always be what we aim for. But in our private lives, when we find it difficult to get on with people, it is much better not to fight. Remember – Lower your guns and smile! God bless you.



COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR PARENTS!

Assembly 74 – May 21st 2003

In every country, parents who love their children are very happy when they can go to school. In every country, when children come home from school, parents ask, “What have you been doing today, dear?” In every country, children say, “Huh! Oh, I don’t know – just this and that –” and they throw their schoolbag down and disappear. Parents everywhere ask themselves, “Why won’t my child talk to me?”

Many parents try and provide nice things for their children. Many of you have beautiful homes, beautiful clothes, beautiful toys and computers, cars with drivers - but one thing that money cannot buy is a good relationship with your parents. That is priceless and that is developed only by attention and care and love – and a lot of time. In any relationship, the most valuable gift you can give, is your time. If your parents have always given you plenty of their time, and helped you to express yourself, helped you to talk about what you do and what you feel, then you are very lucky. Some parents are more busy or shy and do not know how to help you to be more communicative. Do you understand this word ‘communicative’? It means you are able to communicate. It is very important to be able to communicate with people. In school, you must communicate with your teachers, to share with them what you do not understand, what you enjoy and what worries you. You must learn to communicate with one another and not fight and squabble. But it is also important for you to communicate with your parents. This is a skill you need to learn and to practice. It is only half your responsibility, of course, – the other half of the responsibility is your parents’. If your father has died or works in Saudi Arabia or is living with someone else or never comes home until 10 o’clock at night, then there are difficulties – I know. But why not write him a letter or telephone or email him if your lives do not cross very often? And you have to work hard to show that you appreciate those times when you CAN be together. Use your meal-times together as times when you really talk and share your lives and ask each other’s opinions on things and what they feel about things. Don’t just eat and go.

In England, the big family meal of the week used to be Sunday lunch. That was often the only meal of the week when you had roast meat – you put a big piece of meat in the oven and, at the meal, took a big knife and fork and carved it into thin slices. You had vegetables and a wonderful sauce made out of the meat juices called ‘gravy’. This was the meal when a family really felt like a