

Heritage Service

Form 2 at St. John's Cathedral

16th October 2007

This is the very first Heritage Service to be held by St. Paul's College. The intention is for two Heritage Services to be held each year for new and younger boys at the College. The first service will be for you, the boys in Form 2, at the Cathedral Church of St. John's. The second service will be for boys in Form 1 and new teachers, to be held a short distance away at St. Paul's Church in Wyndham Road. The reason why we decided to hold the two services at St. John's Cathedral and St. Paul's Church will become a little clearer to you as I explain the special link between these two buildings and our College.

Last year we celebrated a special birthday, the 155th anniversary of our College. In March this year, this Cathedral also celebrated a special birthday, the 160th anniversary of the laying of the Foundation Stone and the start of this building's construction.

St. Paul's is, at least in concept, older than the city of Hong Kong, for it was in the latter part of the year 1841 that the Rev. Vincent John Stanton started to collect money in England to start the College. Stanton was a noteworthy character and pioneer of Hong Kong. It was while he was at St. John's College in Cambridge that he decided to become a missionary. The Rev. Stanton raised a sum of money to bring to Hong Kong and establish a school with the aim training Chinese clergy and Christian teachers for spread the Word of God in China. The school was also opened to non-Christians boys of all nationalities. It was also hoped that, through their example and influence, the students would spread the blessing of Christianity and education in Hong Kong and China. It was to be an Anglo-Chinese school, which is equivalent to a school with English as the medium of instruction today.

Vincent Stanton was appointed first Colonial Chaplain of Hong Kong and arrived in Hong Kong in December 1843. You will find his name on the honour board at the back of the Cathedral. The building of the school, however, did not materialize for some time as he had many pressing duties, including that of erecting this Cathedral. In time the school was built on the

corner of Wyndham Road and Lower Albert Road and in 1849, St. Paul's College opened with nine boys, taught by an English master, a Chinese master and Mrs. Stanton.

In 1850, Vincent Stanton left Hong Kong and was succeeded by Bishop George Smith. Bishop Smith brought in additional funds and the construction of the school premises was completed in 1851 and the date was inscribed upon the porch of the completed building. The College has adopted 1851 as the more modest date for its foundation rather than 1849. Bishop Smith, writing in 1851, reported that the College contained thirty-three students. The majority of them were Chinese but there were also three students whose families had come from India. The age of the earliest Paulines ranged from 12 to 18. The subjects they studied included English Language and Literature, Geography, Astronomy, Divinity, History, together with Chinese Language and Literature, especially the Four Books and Five Classics of Confucianism. They were also taught Geometry and a few senior boys were given instruction in Greek.

The Cathedral

The word cathedral is derived from the Latin noun "cathedra" (*seat* or *chair*), and refers to the presence of the Bishop's or Archbishop's chair or throne. In the ancient world, the chair was the symbol of a teacher and thus of the Bishop's role as teacher. The word cathedral was originally used in the phrase "cathedral church" and this building is indeed called The Cathedral Church of St. John the Evangelist. The seat marks the place set aside in the prominent church of the diocese for the head of that diocese and is therefore a major symbol of authority.

The School Badge and the Badge of the Diocese of Hong Kong

- **The College Badge (The Coat of Arms)**

You might have already noticed that our Badge (or Coat of Arms) is almost identical to the badge Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui. The badge shows that St. Paul's College is a school sponsored by the Sheng Kung Hui.

- **The Scallop Shell**

The scallop shell was the emblem of St. James who was the patron saint of pilgrims. There is a legend that he traveled to a town called Santiago de Compostela in Northwest Spain, and preached there for seven years.

Pilgrimages were expeditions made by individuals or groups to places where God had shown His power in some special ways.

Often the journeys were long and dangerous. The pilgrims did not mind, because they believed their spiritual lives would be enriched and deepened by their pilgrimage. Often the pilgrim wore on his hat or his cloak a badge indicating his destination. Those going to Santiago de Compostela wore a scallop shell. Perhaps it was a reminder of the small boats in which many of them traveled. Perhaps it had a more practical use as a vessel used in baptism or drinking vessel. At any rate, it eventually became a sign of pilgrimage in general, and a symbol of baptism, signifying new life.

The pilgrims carried new ways of thinking and of doing things to places that were badly isolated from the larger world. They were people on the move - people on the way to somewhere else. Like the pilgrims of old, Paulines are people on the move. When they leave school, many of them literally go to other parts of the world bringing new ways of thinking and of doing things wherever they go. Even those who stay in Hong Kong are also pilgrims, for life itself is like a journey from childhood to youth, to middle age and beyond. It can, and should, be a pilgrimage of mind and spirit towards a fuller and better life both for themselves and others; and like the pilgrimages of old, can enrich and deepen their spiritual lives in the process.

- **The Shepherd's Staff**

The shepherd's staff was used by the shepherd to keep the sheep on the right path. Jesus often used this illustration in his teaching. So it has become the symbol of the care and guidance which the church minister (pastor or priest) gives to others. It is not only clergymen who show this kind of care. Teachers and social workers too do it for many. All of us can do it in one way or another. It should be the aim of Paulines to show this kind of care for others. It is the aim of our school to care for the physical, social, psychological and spiritual welfare of all.

- **The Key**

The key reminds us of the words of Jesus to Peter, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 16:19). The plain fact is that it is not only Peter who has the keys of the Kingdom, every Christian has, for it is open to every one of us to open the door of the Kingdom to someone, and to enter into the great promise of Jesus Christ. The key is always there. It really depends on whether we want to grasp it.

- **The Open Book**

The open book reminds us of the Bible - open for us all to read. The Bible is a gift of God to the world. Indeed, God speaks to us through the Bible. But will we listen to him? The open book also suggests knowledge. Gaining knowledge is, of course, why we go to school.

- **The Crown**

Above all these emblems there is a crown. This may remind us of the tradition that the 'three wise men' who came from the East to worship baby Jesus were also kings. Tradition has generally supposed that they came from Persia (Iran) or Arabia. But who knows? They might have come from as far away as China!

The crown may also refer to the 'crown of life' which God has promised to those who love him (James 1:12). Undoubtedly the crown relates chiefly to the Kingship of Christ. Jesus the Saviour reigns.

- **The Cross**

In our school badge, the Diocesan emblems are surrounded by a cross. The cross is the symbol of self-sacrifice. As Jesus died on a cross, the cross reminds us how much God loves us. As Jesus rose from the dead, the empty cross reminds us of Christ's risen life, and his victory over the powers of evil.

So the cross is the Christian's badge. We are all encouraged to love God, and to love our neighbours as ourselves.

- **The Motto**

The Chinese characters in the motto under the cross are from Proverbs 1:7. They are usually translated in English as 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom'. We spend most of our time in school acquiring knowledge. Our motto reminds us that we must not forget 'the most important part.' The understanding of God gives a whole new dimension to our knowledge. Knowledge now becomes true wisdom. Knowledge makes sense when it is seen in this light.

The fact that the motto is in Chinese is significant. It was more the fashion at that time to use Latin for such a purpose. When St. Paul's College was founded, the main aim was 'the offering to Chinese youths of a modern, liberal education in the English language (but including the subject of

Chinese language in the curriculum) upon Christian principles ...' bringing together the cultures of East and West and the fostering of bilingualism have been the well-established traditions in the school.

Conclusion

Heritage refers to something that is inherited from one's ancestors. The heritage that survives from the past is often unique and irreplaceable, which places the responsibility of preservation on the current generation. Sometimes this refers to buildings and tangible structures, like this Cathedral Church and the Archbishop's throne. Heritage can also apply to items that we cannot touch; ideas, beliefs and values. In this context, heritage can be seen as tradition with the passing of knowledge and history down through the generations.

As St. Paul's College students and teachers, we sit here today embraced by history and tradition. But imagine what it must have been like in 1851 when the Reverend Vincent Stanton, his wife, two teachers and nine boys sat in this Cathedral Church pondering what the future held in store for them and for their school. At that time, Hong Kong and St. Paul's College were struggling to find their feet. What happened over the next 155 years is one of the reasons why we are here today and why we are so proud of our Church, our College and our Heritage.