



Saint David's School

P. DAVID O'HALLORAN, PH.D.
Headmaster

Thursday, August 5, 2004

"A man for all seasons."

Dear Saint David's Family,

I write today to express my sheer delight at the opportunity to serve the Saint David's School community as fifth Headmaster. I am truly excited by the challenge and humbled by the awesome legacies of past Headmasters, the strong and respected name of the school, and the responsibility and trust I have inherited. This year will be spent getting to know, most importantly, our boys, and their teachers, parents, administrators and the very important extended school community of alumni, friends and supporters. I look forward to the opportunity to meet with you and to continue to learn about the hopes, desires and aspirations of the Saint David's community.

"Ut viri boni sint" our school motto, is complex in its simplicity. We all want our sons to be good men, but what does it mean? What do we as parents and educators need to do to achieve this important goal and in so doing simultaneously fulfill this aspiration of our school's Founders? The answers are, like the motto itself, complex, yet they reside in simple, self-evident truths embedded in the historic fabric of our school.

The school's aim from the very earliest days was clear and forthright. In 1951, Saint David's School stated in one of its first publications, "It is the aim of the school to provide a sound, substantial education for the growing boy, equal to the best to be derived from institutions of similar level, in an atmosphere based on the fundamental principles and practices of the Roman Catholic faith." The school went on to say that, "The development of the complete child, physical, mental and moral, is the major consideration." The *nota* depicted below, created by Saint David's Fourth Headmaster some fifty years later, continues to illustrate our commitment to these founding ideals: what we would refer to in today's vernacular as the development of the "whole child" and the school's commitment to the classic tradition of "balance," in the context of a community of learners, a family. Clearly, these long-standing ideals defined the culture of Saint David's long before they became some of the "popular" educational notions that they are today.



In the Saint David's logo above, *Balance* is achieved by providing an education that equally distributes focus on the development of *Scholarship*, *Action* in word and deed, and *Aesthetics*, within a community context molded and shaped by *Spirituality* and *Order*. These are the ideals that form the character of well-rounded, Renaissance men, who, like our patron Saint David are "men for all seasons". By creating well-rounded men who are prepared for all of what life has to offer, in the context of these ideals, our boys become "good men."

A Saint David's boy has always been and will always be, encouraged to find the strength within to rise to the highest levels of personal commitment and excellence in every word and deed.

In addition to these founding ideals, it is also important to remember that Saint David's is an elementary school. The profound implications of this fact can never be underestimated. The early childhood and elementary years are the foundation forming years. These are the years that form the character and the self. The end of "infancy" (between 2 and 3) marks the beginning of the "early childhood years" and the onset of full adolescence (13 to 14) marks the end of the elementary years. These are the years that Saint David's chooses to focus on and these just happen to be the most important years in a boy's life.

"As a twig is bent, so grows the tree."

Along with poets and scientists, we can all agree that paths taken early in our lives launch us on a course that, once set, is difficult to change. Insofar as children's fates are shaped by their experiences in the world, it is reasonable to assume that children's early experiences, the paths they first travel down, will be the most significant for their later development. Plato expressed this view, "... and the beginning, as you know, is always the most important part, especially in dealing with anything young and tender. That is the time when the character is being molded and easily takes any impress one may wish to stamp on it."

In education circles we refer to this notion as "primacy" – the idea that the earliest experiences of children determine their later development. Once these years have passed they cannot easily be recaptured. As a school, Saint David's was keenly attuned to this important notion even in its very earliest years. Second Headmaster David Hume, in his report to the school in 1958 wrote, "We must recognize our part in a long educational process, for we have each boy for only half of his years of schooling. But we must realize that the first half of an education is the essential half and the values retained from it are the most important ideas and ideals that these boys will ever find."

Since the school's founding, we have learned a lot about the way in which children learn and how children interact with their world. As professionals, the faculty and leadership of the school must stay current with the research and thinking of today, while simultaneously critically evaluating it in the context of our work, mission, and history. We cannot rest solely on the methods and practices of the past to the exclusion of the innovations and current thinking of the present; we cannot completely ignore or release the tried and true practices of the past for the untried and untested methods and practices of the present. Like the students we aim to graduate, we too must always be looking to achieve balance in our pedagogy. As Gregory Smith, one of Saint David's most influential founders saw it, Saint David's lives in the "eternal present," always growing, changing; improving.

Fulfilling the classic tradition of balance in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding in our ever-changing world and remaining true to those values and traditions most important to us is the exciting challenge we face together at Saint David's. In the same way that the spiral staircase of the original school building winds upward through the inside of the school, providing the way, these ideals, imbedded in the school's culture from its earliest days, provide for the formation of the character of our boys from the inside out. Through rigorous scholarship, a commitment to ethical behavior, and a thorough understanding of what responsible, respectful membership in a community means – our sense of family – our boys will continue to distinguish themselves as vivacious young men of ideas and ideals, action and reflection ... men for all seasons ... good men.

I look to the leadership of this unique and special school community in the fulfillment of our mission with great anticipation. I sense it will be an exciting, rewarding, and thoroughly enjoyable experience. Viva Saint David's!

Sincerely yours,

P. David O'Halloran, Ph.D.
Headmaster