

The Page and the Epistle



OPINIONS

OPINION: RESURRECT THE SCHOOL PRAYER AT ST. PAUL'S SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

APRIL 29, 2021 | PAIGE BOLLINGER | 40 COMMENTS

Teach us, Good Lord, To serve Thee as Thou deservest, To give and not to count the cost, To fight and not to heed the wounds, To toil and not to seek for rest, To labor and not to ask for any reward, Save that of knowing that we do Thy will; Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

To generations of alumnae, faculty, and students from The St. Paul's Schools, these words evoke strong feelings of shared faith, compassion, and delight that will forever dwell as treasure within their hearts. But to others, these words seem foreign, new, and confusing.

The prayer above is the Generosity Prayer of St. Ignatius, also known as the long-standing school prayer of both SP and SPSG that has knit together thousands of former and current members of our joint school community. Not only does this lovely prayer represent the cherished Episcopal tradition, but it speaks to the school's values, legacy, and aspirations while conveying a beautiful and timeless message that is applicable to all.

As the world around us undergoes progressive modernization and change, tradition fades. This is the natural cycle of progress, and it is apparent within our own school community as certain aspects of our

culture have disappeared after being deemed outdated or inappropriate for the current times. The St. Paul's Crusader costume, for example, is no longer worn at games and other school events due to the historical controversy of this symbol. Although some of these outlaws may be valid, certain elements of the school community such as the school's faith must stay because it will never fail to provide us with a solid ground to stand on.

Despite this truth, aspects of the Episcopal tradition at SPSG have unfortunately faded, a main one being the school prayer. This prayer, which was once recited during every Prayers at SPSG, has been almost forgotten within the girl's school. Although it is still occasionally included on the programs at special ceremonies, this prayer is no longer recognized at SPSG. Many students are unaware that a school prayer even exists.

Explanations Behind the Prayer's Demise

The exact reason behind the prayer's demise at SPSG is unknown, but there is speculation. According to Reverend Susan Ballenger, SPSG chaplain, some opposed the "militant" language and masculine tone, while others felt it did not reflect the school's value of inclusivity due to its reference to Jesus. Additionally, Reverend Mark Stanley, the Co-rector at Old St. Paul's Church, mentioned that some might also oppose it due to its "ancient" language; he described how the "thee," "though," and "thy" diction, along with the more complicated sentence structure, may be challenging for some to understand.

These reasons only allow a single, narrow point of interpretation. The opinion that the prayer is too militant is sparked by the line, "To fight and not to heed the wounds." Instead of just focusing on the shallow interpretation of this phrase, we must look deeper and examine the actual meaning of the text, which is to display moral courage and to fight for what is right. In addition to inspiring moral uprightness, this prayer encourages service to others, justice, compassion, and spiritual growth. These values expressed in the prayer strongly correlate with our mission statement at SPSG:

"St. Paul's School for Girls educates hearts and minds in an inclusive community that is grounded in the Episcopal values of respect, integrity, and spiritual growth. We empower voice, nurture intellectual curiosity and creativity, and inspire confident leaders who serve in the world."

The Generosity Prayer of St. Ignatius also aligns directly with the four pillars of an Episcopal school: chapel and worship, ethos and community, religious studies and spiritual formation, and service and social justice. We strive "To give and not to count the cost" and "To labor and not to ask for any reward" because we are grounded in serving others, taking a stand, and doing what is right. Therefore, to overlook this prayer would mean to overlook the values of our school.

Some express concern about the prayer being "too Christian," since it is credited to St. Ignatius of Loyola, who was a Jesuit Catholic. The reality is that the author and origins of the prayer are unknown and there

is no reference to the prayer in any records before 1897 (thinkingfaith.org). Many believe that it was attributed to St. Ignatius because he was an advocate for generosity and would presumably have approved of the prayer, give his comment in *Spiritual Exercises*: “love should consist more in deeds than words.” This creed is applicable to all people, Christian or not. Therefore, removing this prayer because it comes off as “Catholic sponsored” undermines the generosity that it stands for and reflects a shallow perspective.

The Value of Being an Episcopal Institution

The prayer's references to God and Jesus have disturbed some who feel that the language may not be applicable to non-Christians. As an Episcopal school, we are grounded in inclusivity and welcome people of all faiths. The school does not force anyone to be Christian; all community members are embraced regardless of their beliefs. Although this holds true, the Episcopal tradition is a “tenant of our identity,” as Ms. Ebony Harley '05, President of the SPSG Alumnae Association, remarked. “It is important to not apologize for our Episcopal identity; we have to own it and be true to it,” says Reverend Dan Meck, SP chaplain. To help illuminate the philosophy behind this, Reverend Meck alluded to the “Big Tent” analogy: The St. Paul's Schools (the tent) welcomes all people to enter, however, the structure of the tent (our Episcopal affiliation) does not change.

In general, there is so much value that comes from the presence of religion at an institution. Although The St. Paul's Schools highly cherishes its roots with Old St. Paul's Church, the inspiration behind cultivating student faith here goes much deeper. Mrs. Edee Waller, who recently retired from the SPSG faculty after 40 years, explained, “Being faith-oriented inspires us to seek spiritual growth and to look outside of ourselves.” This idea of gaining an enhanced perception of the world around us, whether this means finding faith in a God or not, is extremely beneficial as it spurs intellectual curiosity amongst students. The SPSG pillar of spiritual growth corresponds to the SP pillar of “live by faith,” which Reverend Stanley defined as “to be open to something greater than yourself and to base your life in it.” Students at The St. Paul's Schools are encouraged to find purpose, make their mark, to seek, search, and discover, and observing a faith helps us to do this.

On a personal level, the comforting constancy of religion is emotionally appealing. Mrs. Ereni Malfa '89, the Head of SPSG, supported this idea: “faith can be our steady as it gives us something to fall back on.” With the crazy world around us full of constant change, many people value religion for this dependability factor and are able to find peace through their faith. Mrs. Waller agreed, attesting to how faith is always there, during both times of celebration and sorrow.

To be more specific, The St. Paul's Schools finds appeal in the Episcopal religion specifically because its engaging pillars align with our identity and aspirations as a school. Mrs. Malfa elaborated on the values of our Episcopal identity: “The Episcopal tradition is particularly special and appealing because of its progressive nature, female empowerment, and emphasis on social justice, inclusivity, and community.” Rev-

erend Ballenger expanded on this point, noting how the central focus of our Episcopal affiliation “gives us grounding.” Furthermore, Mrs. Kimberly Parks '86, SPSG Director of Development, concurred: “Our Episcopal values set a tone for all of us: student or teacher, Episcopal or other faith. These things are something for everyone to aspire to.”

Because the St. Paul's Schools has conscientiously made the decision to remain Episcopal, it is important that we live out these values every day. Although we embrace other faiths by teaching about other religions and acknowledging non-Christian holidays, we must retain the balance between including others but still being Episcopal. Reverend Meck explained that “If we try to be all faiths to all people then that weathers everything away.” So, using his big tent analogy, it is proper that we acknowledge our belief in a monotheistic God and worship Jesus. Consequently, the removal of the school prayer at SPSG because of a reference to Jesus or God betrays our faith and as Mrs. Malfa put it, would be “disingenuous.”

Discrepancy Between SP and SPSG

Not only should the prayer be resurrected because it so highly represents the school's Episcopal values, but it would also be a fundamental step in successful unification between St. Paul's and St. Paul's School for Girls. There is a clear contrast between the representation of the Episcopal tradition at both schools: the religious aspect at SP is still very much a part of student life, but at SPSG it is more downplayed. Reverend Ballenger agreed: “religion at SP is more explicit, while religion at SPSG is more implicit.” Ms. Harley witnessed this inconsistency during her time as a student in the early 2000's: “although both schools had good intentions, it felt like a Boy's school thing that girls were invited to.” This feeling of missing out remains. SP conducts weekly services in the chapel that include recitation of the school prayer along with the Lord's prayer, but at SPSG, chapel is held in the gym with no recitation of these prayers. Additionally, SP offers Eucharist monthly, but SPSG typically only offers it once a year, on Ash Wednesday.

The Beloved Episcopal History at SPSG

It has not always been like this, and prior to the 21st century, the Episcopal tradition was more vividly integrated into the student experience at SPSG. The history of SPSG, *through all Our Days* (1999), by former faculty member Ms. Mary Bready, describes how religion was a major element of the SPSG student experience for decades. From the school's origins at North Charles street to the 1990's, there has always been a “deep concern for moral values and Christian thought” (163). Alumnae such as Mrs. Malfa and Mrs. Parks attest to this and both well remember, love, and *miss* the Episcopal tradition. They cherish their memories at Prayers and Chapel when it was in the dance studio and reflected a more reverent atmosphere. They fondly recollect using hymnals and receiving Eucharist monthly. Both admire the school prayer, and have it memorized to this day, for its daily recitation was an unforgettable part of their time as students. Both alumnae remarked that they would rejoice to see this prayer resurrected.

Revive the Prayer

With the recent unification of the schools, the gap between faith expression at SP and SPSG has become increasingly noticeable and problematic. Now that we are one school, the execution of the Episcopal identity needs to be more cohesive between SP and SPSG in order for us to be truly unified. Steps are being made to ensure this, such as the promotion of Reverend Meck to head chaplain of both schools. This should lead to more consistency across campus over time. However, one immediate, easy and helpful step towards this goal would be the revival of the school prayer at SPSG. We have a duty as an Episcopal school to ensure that its all-encompassing values are part of our culture, and to be clear on what we believe. A constant repetition of this prayer, perhaps weekly at chapel, would benefit our community and positively impact our culture. It would be a positive reminder to all, and hearing the prayer repeated consistently and truly absorbing its message would, according to Mrs. Waller, “help us to approach things with a more open spirit and bring the prayer’s values closer to our hearts and minds.”

Nurturing the Spirit Within Each of Us

The Generosity Prayer of St. Ignatius is more than just a historical tradition at The St. Paul's Schools. It is more than just a simple indicator of Episcopal establishment. It embodies who we are, and its timeless message and very essence speak to what our community strives to be. Its resurrection within the walls of SPSG will only strengthen us as a community and as individual people. Through fostering the goodness of the spirit within each of us, the revival of the school prayer will prepare us to be joyful women who will gracefully and confidently serve the world.



orbfamily.com

40 THOUGHTS ON “OPINION: RESURRECT THE SCHOOL PRAYER AT ST. PAUL’S SCHOOL FOR GIRLS”



Charley Mitchell

MAY 3, 2021 AT 1:59 PM

This thoughtful essay should get us thinking.



Tuesday Hayes-Mullen

JULY 5, 2021 AT 10:35 AM

I appreciate this insightful essay on the value and benefits of prayer within our schools. (SP and SPSPG)



Carley

MAY 21, 2022 AT 12:22 AM

Why is it I always really feel like you do?



Tuyet

MAY 21, 2022 AT 3:25 AM

That's a great point



Malissa

MAY 22, 2022 AT 10:10 PM

Wonderful views on that!



Theresa

MAY 25, 2022 AT 11:27 AM

I didn't know that.



Luigi

JUNE 3, 2022 AT 1:44 PM

Pretty nice post. I just stumbled upon your blog and wished to say that I've really enjoyed browsing your blog posts.

In any case I'll be subscribing to your rss feed and I hope you write again soon!



Lori

JUNE 5, 2022 AT 5:46 AM

It is really a nice and useful piece of information. I'm glad that you shared this helpful information with us.

Please stay us informed like this. Thanks for sharing.



Ryan Bellows

JUNE 17, 2022 AT 10:23 PM

Thanks for sharing excellent informations. Your website is so cool. I am impressed by the details that you have on this site. It reveals how nicely you perceive this subject. Bookmarked this web page, will come back for extra articles. You, my pal, ROCK! I found simply the information I already searched everywhere and just couldn't come across. What a perfect web site.



yesbet88

JUNE 28, 2022 AT 5:04 AM

Beast



yesbet88

JUNE 28, 2022 AT 8:12 AM

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JUNE 28, 2022 AT 8:59 PM

Hi, I think your site might be having browser compatibility issues. When I look at your website in Safari, it looks fine but when opening in Internet Explorer, it has some overlapping. I just wanted to give you a quick heads up! Other than that, fantastic blog!



Dong

JULY 1, 2022 AT 1:49 PM

I have learn a few just right stuff here. Definitely worth bookmarking for revisiting. I surprise how a lot attempt you put to make one of these fantastic informative website.



Emilie

JULY 1, 2022 AT 1:51 PM

Highly descriptive blog, I enjoyed that a lot. Will there be a part 2?



Carroll

JULY 1, 2022 AT 1:57 PM

Hi I am so excited I found your weblog, I really found you by mistake, while I was searching on Askjeeve for something else, Anyways I am here now and would just like to say thank you for a marvelous post and a all round entertaining blog (I also love the theme/design), I don't have time to browse it all at the minute but I have saved it and also added in your RSS feeds, so when I have time I will be back to read much more, Please do keep up the awesome b.



Toby

JULY 1, 2022 AT 2:52 PM

Highly energetic article, I loved that bit. Will there be a part 2?



Debra

JULY 1, 2022 AT 3:14 PM

Very soon this site will be famous among all blog viewers, due to it's good posts



Trista

JULY 1, 2022 AT 4:37 PM

Hi, I check your blog regularly. Your story-telling style is awesome, keep doing what you're doing!



Annis

JULY 1, 2022 AT 5:11 PM

After looking at a few of the articles on your web site, I truly like your way of writing a blog. I added it to my bookmark site list and will be checking back in the near future. Please visit my website too and tell me your opinion.

**Ramon**

JULY 1, 2022 AT 6:07 PM

Hi there, I enjoy reading all of your article post.
I like to write a little comment to support you.

**German**

JULY 1, 2022 AT 6:32 PM

I am sure this article has touched all the internet users, its really really pleasant post on building up new webpage.

**Demi**

JULY 1, 2022 AT 6:45 PM

Hey! I just wanted to ask if you ever have any trouble with hackers?
My last blog (wordpress) was hacked and I ended up losing a few months of hard work due to no data backup. Do you have any methods to stop hackers?

**Dr. Mudri Sándor Balázs ügyvéd Budapest**

AUGUST 15, 2022 AT 4:03 AM

I think this is among the most significant information for me. And i'm glad reading your article. But should remark on some general things, The web site style is great, the articles is really excellent : D.
Good job, cheers

**샌즈카지노**

AUGUST 15, 2022 AT 8:53 PM

Major thankies for the post.Thanks Again. Fantastic.

**샌즈카지노**

AUGUST 15, 2022 AT 11:22 PM

Wow, great post. Want more.

**driving instructor**

AUGUST 17, 2022 AT 7:55 PM

Thanks for the blog post. Much thanks again. Keep writing.



stream live soccer

AUGUST 19, 2022 AT 7:09 PM

Very good article. Thanks Again. Will read on...



kumpulan situs slot online

AUGUST 20, 2022 AT 3:21 PM

Really enjoyed this blog article. Really looking forward to read more. Keep writing.



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AUGUST 20, 2022 AT 8:24 PM

Im grateful for the blog. Much obliged.



19다모아

AUGUST 21, 2022 AT 9:09 PM

Very informative article post. Cool.



Send money to Nigeria

AUGUST 22, 2022 AT 1:43 PM

I value the article. Really looking forward to read more. Fantastic.



video chat with horny girls

AUGUST 26, 2022 AT 2:32 PM

Great article. Thanks Again. Keep writing.



Gal Jerman

AUGUST 31, 2022 AT 11:48 AM

Top ,.. top top ... post! Keep the good work on !



pgslot

SEPTEMBER 3, 2022 AT 8:04 PM

Muchos Gracias for your blog article. Much thanks again.



get started

SEPTEMBER 4, 2022 AT 6:45 AM

I truly appreciate this blog. Really looking forward to read more. Cool.



xgxpz

SEPTEMBER 6, 2022 AT 11:57 AM

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SEPTEMBER 10, 2022 AT 3:32 PM

Looking forward to reading more. Great post.Thanks Again. Really Cool.



driving lessons

SEPTEMBER 10, 2022 AT 9:57 PM

Very good blog post.Thanks Again. Much obliged.



kelvin kaemingk

SEPTEMBER 11, 2022 AT 9:06 AM

Fantastic blog post.Thanks Again. Great.



top cryptocurrency to buy

SEPTEMBER 12, 2022 AT 12:48 AM

Wonderful beat ! I would like to apprentice at the same time as you amend your site, how can i subscribe for a weblog website? The account helped me a acceptable deal. I had been tiny bit familiar of this your broadcast offered shiny transparent idea