

Christmas Dinner Speech 2020 – Head Boy Aidan Larkin

“Good morn” [evening] everyone (sorry, a force of habit)! I would like to welcome and thank you all for coming to our annual Christmas dinner. This is a time of unity, with every one of us coming together to enjoy the festive period. They say a good speech has a good beginning and a good ending - and to have them close together! So, don't worry, I promise I won't keep you too long.

This has given me the opportunity to think and reflect about what Villiers has meant to me so far, and the different memories I have made here. And I found myself thinking about time, about how it flies by, and about how there's never enough of it, about how we don't always get to appreciate the time we have, and the people we share our time with. I feel like I started at Villiers last week, and now I'm here standing in front of you, at my last Christmas dinner, with only half a year left!

So where did all this time go? Well, as we look back at the start, I'm sure most of you here remember walking through the white front gates on your first day of Form I. All nervous with sweaty palms, like me now, feeling as scared as when you don't mention your please and thanks to Val in the café. At least we can all say we have learnt our manners.

Back then, I found this dining hall to be quite a daunting place. I religiously held on tight to my tray, so it didn't drop with a collective “wayyyyy” from everyone. I think for many people, the most stressful thing about the Junior Cert years was getting a hockey disco or synergy ticket from Holly and Chris before they were all gone. One thing I don't miss is the smell and sheer volume of fake tan!

I feel like those years went by so quickly. Time does fly when you're having fun, but certainly not when you're bursting for the toilet in one of Ms Gowing's classes. I can tell you that for sure, time does not fly then! Instead, you are told to “burst away”.

Swinging up through the years, like Ms. Rea from scam to scam, we embarked on a journey that is Transition Year. I find that this is the time that glues a herd of 100 students together. You suddenly aren't in your form class for most of the day, forcing everyone to talk to each other, building new friendships, and for some, relationships. Let me tell you that for these relationships, a socially distanced 2 metres were not being kept, especially in Achill (You know who you are). We became drummers, chefs, entrepreneurs, hikers, models, actors, actresses and many more. A bit bizarre to think you could become so many things in under a year. It goes to show, that nothing is impossible.

The rest of the year was composed of many trips, some going skiing in Italy, with others travelling to the likes of Uganda, Barcelona and the renowned “Achill”. I don't know where to begin about the TY drama. The thought of our last performance of it still makes me laugh to this day, as a box got stuck to Hannah's dress, causing her to drag it all around the stage.

With Form 5 came the arrival of many new faces, a bigger workload and a lot of coffee! The year brought many challenges, the main one being seeing Mr. Sadleir for 11 times a week. I was fortunate enough to go on a M.U.N trip to Athens this February. It came in perfect timing as it was the last chance we've been able to travel. The workload started to build up, so Leo Varadkar came along and presented us with a supposedly “two weeks off” in March, but as we know, this turned out to be a slight bit longer.

I find that in a lot of ways, there are glimmers of positivity to a year that has seen so much change. The teachers are being more lenient with what we wear. Many days of Form 5 were spent by Mr. Griffin telling me to take my jacket off. As well as that, the masks hid the embarrassment and shame of most of the Movember moustaches, or lack thereof in David's case. Most of the girls felt as though they could grow a better one. Jokes aside, as one of my favourite Irish Sheanfhocals says: “Casann an Roth”- the wheel turns. This virus will pass and in no time, this dining hall will be packed full of people again like previous Christmas dinners.

To all the teachers in front of me tonight, and those that couldn't be here, this bit is dedicated to you. A good teacher is a possession of our society. They are honest, hardworking, and very talented. A good teacher always encourages the students to flourish their inner talents. They discover the treasure hidden inside each pupil. I'm extremely lucky to say that we have been blessed with a multitude of great teachers here at Villiers. Through all the times we've considered them as the thorn in our backside, I suppose it's fair to say that their continued work in helping us achieve our goals to be the best we can, and doesn't go unnoticed!

They have also been there through all the funny and happy memories of our time in school. From, Ms Moloney sounding Canadian and Irish at the same time, Ms Storey always to the rescue, letting us back inside after the many fire drills in the rain, Ms Crowley jumping into a river in Derg Isle to save Bryan Smyth's phone, to Ms Quinn's inability to not mention Saturday Study or her famous word "guys" in a day, just to name a few. I must not forget two of our newest members of staff, Louis and Alfie the dogs, keeping Damien and Ms. Woods on their toes. The student-teacher relationship in this school is one of a kind. Therefore, we say with ultimate gratitude... thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

To all the non-teaching staff, I'd like to give a big shout out to you too. Your hard work never goes unnoticed, and I hope you enjoy the small tokens of appreciation that have been made for you this year that will be given out later. In particular, I'd like to say a huge thank you and congratulations to all those who were involved in the preparation of tonight's wonderful meal. It has been thoroughly enjoyed so far!

So, what has all my time here at Villiers made me realise? I suppose not to bring a hot chocolate into Mr McCrohan's class. Sorry Georgia, but I think you learned that the hard way. That Mr Griffin's serious face is a rare occurrence because he never stops smiling. That Mr White's ability to swap between multiple accents when reading things is one of a kind. That if you hear some obscure noises in the corridor, it's bound to be none other than Genni Flynn, and that if a cat or dog enters your class, don't be alarmed.

And as time has it, good things must come to an end. As Jon Foreman once said "Happiness is like peeing in your pants. Everyone can see it, but only you can feel the warmth." Villiers has presented me with so many happy memories and it's been an honour so far representing the school as Head Boy. As I approach the final chapter of a long book here, thank you all for an unforgettable 5 and a half years. I can only expect the last bit to be as good if not better. The Villiers family is indescribable, and Ms Keane and Ms Byrne have acted as my second moms. I'm so grateful for the friendships I've made, the laughs we've had, the teachers we have learned from and many other moments that have shaped us into the people we are. On that note, I'd like to wish everyone an early Merry Christmas and a best of luck to the 5th years doing exams next week. Slán leat agus bain taitneamh as na laethanta saoire na Nollag.