

Denton Rarawa: The importance of fearing God as you climb your life's mountains

Keynote address by Mr Denton Rarawa, Governor of Central Bank of Solomon Islands, at the Su'u National Secondary School 2013 Graduation Ceremony, Malaita Province, 2 November 2013.

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Introduction

Chairman of Su'u School Board, Mr Edward Ronia;

Other Su'u School Board Members;

Education Director, SSE Church, Mr Joash Maneipuri

Su'u School Principal, Mr Johnson Paraerae;

Deputy Principal, Mr Timothy Aihunu;

Other members of Staff of Su'u School;

Former students & friends of Su'u School

Parents and Guardians;

Chiefs and Community Leaders of Dorio;

Graduating Students;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, let me thank the Su'u School Graduation Organizing Committee for inviting me yesterday to be your Guest of Honour at this Graduation ceremony this afternoon. It is indeed an honour and privilege for me to be here. It is also good to be back at Su'u after 35 years. I still have fond memories of my time as a student here, although most have faded over the years. The place has certainly changed but it is really sad to see that the school facilities have been allowed to deteriorate over the years.

This afternoon I will address mainly the graduating students. Some of you, especially Forms 3, 5 and 6 students will continue your education next year here at Su'u school or in other schools in the country. Some Forms 6 and 7 graduates will enter university at SINU or within the region. But most of you will find employment or return to your communities.

The theme of my presentation this afternoon is: ***"The importance of fearing God as you climb your life's mountains"***. I don't know why I chose the analogy of "mountains". Maybe because Su'u school sits on top of a mountain.

I have a friend from Nepal. Nepal is a tiny country between China (or the Chinese province of Tibet) and India. Nepal is a mountainous country. In fact, the highest mountain in the world, Mt Everest is in Nepal. My Nepalese friend is an avid mountain climber in his younger days. He was telling me about the most satisfying and most frustrating aspects of mountain climbing.

The best part of mountain climbing is when you finally ***reach the top of the mountain***. It is a very satisfying feeling. You reach the top and celebrate, congratulate your colleagues, punch the air, shout and laugh. But the most frustrating part, especially in Nepal, is upon reaching the top and celebrating, you see not far away, ***another mountain higher than the one you just reached the top***.

I think this story best represents our journey in life. Apostle Paul in the Bible refers to it as a "race", others as a "fight" while even others look at it as a "development process". I will refer

to our life's journey as that of "**mountain climbing**". Since the time we are born and up to the time we die, we continuously climb mountains.

I believe today you have reached the top of one of your mountains, your "secondary school mountain". That is why we are here this afternoon participating in this graduation ceremony. You have successfully completed Forms 3, 5, 6 and 7. It is time for celebrations and thanksgiving. You can congratulate yourselves and each other. Your parents and teachers are proud of you.

But having reached the top of your "secondary school mountain", you are actually at the bottom of your next mountain in life. It could be your "university education mountain", a "career mountain" or even a "new family mountain".

Some of you completing Form 7 this year, for example, may be fortunate to get a university scholarship next year to continue your studies. You may have reached the top of your secondary school mountain this year, but next year you will start at the bottom of a new mountain, your "university education mountain". You start your first year at university and work your way up that mountain for another four years before you reach the top of that mountain.

After four years and having successfully climbed the "university mountain" you graduate with a university degree ready to join the workforce. Even with a university degree, when you join the workforce, you start as a junior officer at the bottom of a new mountain, your "professional career mountain". Over time, as you gain experience and new skills, you work your way up your "career mountain" until you reach the top of that mountain.

In the Public Service, you become the Permanent Secretary (PS), in the Private Sector you become the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Company or State Owned Enterprise (SOE). These positions are at the top of those organizations and companies. But to reach the top, you have to start at the bottom and climb your way up.

Along the way, you meet your future partner and start a family at the bottom of a new mountain, your "family mountain". At your wedding, you celebrate with family and friends. Your parents or friends spend a lot of money for your wedding. But you are just at the bottom of your "family mountain".

So we see that life is like climbing mountains. As soon as we reach the top of one mountain, we start at the bottom of another one.

Right tools & equipment important

In mountain climbing, as in everything else, you need the right equipment and tools to succeed. You need the right safety equipment, strong ropes, right clothing especially shoes. Imagine a female mountain climber trying to climb with "high heel" shoes. She will not get very far up the mountain.

I believe some of these "tools and equipment" you have learnt and acquired here at Su'u School. You have developed "**study habits**" that are very important when you go to university. If you can't and don't study at university, you will not reach the top of your "university mountain". Other Christian values such as **honesty, hard work, faithfulness** and **respect** are important tools you have been taught during your time here at Su'u school. These values are important for success later in life, when you climb your other mountains, be it your professional career or family.

But I believe, the most critical tool you need to successfully climb your mountains in life is to have the "**Fear of our Creator**". Su'u School over the years has promoted Christian values and produced many God-fearing Solomon Islanders who are now at the top of their respective mountains. So I would like to encourage you all, our graduating students to practice your Christian values acquired at this school but most of all **fear God** in everything you do when you leave this school. Fear God as you climb your next mountain and he will

guide you and provide for you. The Bible says it very clearly...“**without me, you can do nothing**”

Last night at the Form 5 dinner, Solomon Islands’ Auditor General and Chairman of the Su’u School Board, Mr Edward Ronia, spoke about corruption in our country. Corruption is like cancer that is destroying our country. I fully agree with his assessments. In fact corruption is a major obstacle holding back our country from developing. It is not about money or lack of it. There is a lot of money in our country. We generate a lot of money from our economic activities and our Development Partners provide a lot of assistance to our country. In fact, Solomon Islands is one of the high “aid per capita” countries in the world.

So our problem is not because we don’t have money. It is because we have mismanaged our money and corruption is a very big part of that mismanagement. And corruption is rife in our country because our leaders, we the people of this country have lost or forgotten that important value of **fearing God**.

A God-fearing leader will not accept that “yellow envelope” pushed under the table. A God-fearing businessman will not pay that extra \$1000 to the Tender Board member to secure that “road maintenance” project. A God-fearing politician will put that wharf where it makes economic sense to have a wharf and not where his supporters live. A God-fearing school principal will not ask for \$500 from me to transfer my child to his school.

So we can see that corruption is indeed a cancer slowly eating away at the core of our country. But that’s not what our Creator wants our country to be. We are meant to be a healthy, wealthy country, not a sick and corrupted one. We are called Solomon Islands, after one of the wisest kings that ever lived for a reason. And I believe that Solomon Islanders are wise people. But why are we allowing this to happen to our beloved country? How do we get our country out of this situation?

I believe we need to re-dedicate and re-commit our country to **fear God** in everything we do. We all need to re-dedicate ourselves to fight corruption in our country.

And you graduating students of Su’u School who already fear God and will soon go out into the world and climb your new mountains, I encourage you to hold on strongly to your Christian values and the fear of God. Your Christian values and the fear of God will enable you to deal with whatever challenges you will face wherever you may be.

Your parents, guardians and teachers have played their part in helping you reach this stage, the top of your “secondary school mountain”. Your parents/guardians have invested in your education by paying your school fees and provided for your needs when at school. Your teachers have also played their part in teaching you and imparting their skills and knowledge to you here at Su’u School. This is all they can do and have done for you. It is up to you now to repay their investment in you in terms of finances, time, effort and intellectual guidance to be successful in whatever you do after Su’u School. If you hold on strongly to your Christian values, apply them in whatever you do and continue to fear God, I believe you will be successful and your future will be bright.

But first you must succeed in your exams next week. On that note, I wish you all the best in your exams and may God’s many blessing be upon you as you answer that exam question or tick the box of that “multiple choice” question.

Thank you for listening.

May God Bless Su’u School and May God Bless Solomon Islands.