



**The Prime Minister
St. Vincent and the Grenadines
West Indies**

July 03, 2017

My Dear Students,

As the 2016-2017 school year winds down, I want to offer a few words of advice to all students and those who are leaving school or college for work or further studies. I am sure that your parents, teachers, and counsellors have given you much useful advice for your life's journey. I would try here not to tread the beaten path and bore you. Forgive me if I do so.

First, whatever challenges or difficulties you may face, please remember that you are stuffed with strengths and possibilities to be harnessed for your personal and social development. An old English poet, William Woodsworth, had beautifully written these arresting lines:

*"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven."*

Although it is blissful to be alive, to be young is heavenly! So, make the most, in every meaningful way, of this heavenly condition of youthfulness.

Secondly, look around you for symbols of strength and resilience. To be sure, there are likely to be persons who have inspired you and who have been able to draw out uplifting qualities in you. So, learn from them but remember always that these persons are also human beings with failings or shortcomings of one kind or another. Thus, look, too, at other symbols of strength and resilience.

When I was a boy growing up in a rural village, Colonarie, I pondered about, and marvelled at, the old-man-beard (o-m-b) grass. There are many folk tales and true life stories about it. The o-m-b grass is tough, sturdy and unbowed; its blades are sharp yet delicate; it bears the weight of the world; gale-force winds sway it but break it not; it protects the huddling child and the elderly from the ravages of storms; it holds together embankments with its interlocking roots; rain enriches its roots and leaves; sunshine fortifies it. The o-m-b grass holds many lessons for the young and not-so-young, it is an apt metaphor.

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As a boy, too, at Colonarie, I observed the turbulence of an overflowing river. There was one object that never sank, beneath the watery tumult: It was the top half of the dry husk of a coconut with a stick stuck in it for balance. So, find your balance; cultivate your balance; and let your life be balanced. Do not allow yourself to go under life's tumultuous waters.

Finally, combine your human intelligence and divine inspiration. They are part of an undivided whole. Each of these two parts of the whole will lead you to a better place. Applying human intelligence and divine inspiration will bring you success in achieving your goals.

So, embrace fully the heavenly condition of youthfulness; be strong and resilient like the o-m-b grass; find and keep your balance; and let your human intelligence and divine inspiration work for you in communion with, and love for, your fellow human beings.

Congratulations to each of you on your efforts in the past school year and all the best to you all as your future unfolds. Please remember that of all time, only the future is yours to desecrate.

Sincerely yours,

A blue circular stamp with the text "PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE" at the top and "ST. VINCENT & THE GRENADINES" at the bottom. Overlaid on the stamp is a handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ralph E. Gonsalves".

Dr. The Hon. Ralph E. Gonsalves
Prime Minister

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