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Statement to Staff: 24 January 1997

I have to inform you of the death yesterday of Mr Kevin Lynch. For those new to the staff, I need to add that Kevin has been the Student Counsellor at St Paul's, and has served the School well in that critical role since early in 1989.

I knew that Kevin had an appointment yesterday morning, but I became concerned when he had not turned up when he was expected. I expressed my concerns to Fr George, and Fr George, who is the staff-member who lives closest to Kevin, agreed to check his house on his way home. I became so concerned by the end of the afternoon that I also contacted the police. Fr George arrived there shortly before the police, and found that Kevin had died some time earlier. There will be an investigation as usual in such cases.

I ask your concern and prayers for Fr George in respect of his experiences yesterday.

Kevin's family have asked for time to consider further before making any funeral arrangements. I shall be speaking to them again later today.

Such an event as this cannot be considered simply as an event. I spoke to many of you yesterday of the significance of the interplay of relationships in a School like St Paul's; Fr George had earlier spoken to us of our responsibility as staff in helping to build up the community of faith which is St Paul's School.

That community, that commonness of purpose, is now under severe strain. Some of us in the Chapel here are dumbfounded; some angry; some confused; some unbelieving; all grieving; few if any of us knowing how to control or even to structure our reactions. The impact on us will be long-lasting, and it may be days or weeks or longer before we come to a full appreciation of how this news has really affected us. And if this is true of us as adults, with our maturity and experience, what will be the reaction of our present and recently past students?

We all have to be prepared to help each other. Some of us may feel the need to seek more professional help at this time than we can give each other. I shall be happy to make appropriate referrals. Don Burnes, who has worked here while Kevin was on leave in the past, and who was a very close friend of Kevin's, is one person who has offered his help.

I shall try to be as frank as possible in answering any questions you may have. You will know that there may be some questions I am unable to answer satisfactorily for you. But I am not sure that "satisfaction" is a word which has much meaning as we try to come to terms with the enormity of a situation like this.

Copies of what I am saying to you this morning have been run off for any who would like to have one. This is a confidential statement for your information as staff, and not for wider distribution without my permission. Some, I know, have been unable to be here. Watch for their arrival, and be prepared to help them as they learn the news. By the time School resumes on Tuesday there is no doubt that the news of Kevin's death will have reached many students and parents. What I shall say to the students when we meet will be determined in its final form in the light of that public information.

However, you and I all know enough about communities, and especially School communities, to realise that by then we shall have to deal with rumours and fantasies, - gossip of all kinds. I can only ask you to exercise as keenly as you can your professional responsibility, your collegiate responsibility, and your personal responsibility to a respected colleague, and attempt to ensure that any such difficulty is handled firmly, positively, and without additional or unnecessary comment which either through casualness, negligence, or even deliberate misinterpretation might result in exacerbating the situation.

It is necessary for me formally to instruct that any and all intrusive or persistent enquiries which may foment such problems, or which involve any contact with or any approach from the media, **must** be referred to me. Be careful of making any comments to others outside the framework of what I have read to you. Be aware that even your most sincere attempts to be helpful may lead to misunderstandings for which you may then be held responsible. We must always remain aware of our legal responsibilities when we are speaking with members of the School community, or about School matters. I apologise for stressing again that any approaches from media personnel must be referred directly to me.

I believe it would be quite inappropriate for us to meet as planned this evening to celebrate the start of the School year. I have therefore cancelled the planned dinner. We shall reschedule this function, or arrange that the important information about the Council's plans for School development be communicated to all staff in some other way.

I can only conclude by asking for your support, as I pledge mine to you.

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Lord Jesus Christ,  
you knew the agony of dying alone and abandoned.  
We cannot know the agony which Kevin felt at this time.  
We grieve that we could not meet his needs.  
Console us in the face of death's seeming triumph,  
forgive us for failing Kevin in his time of need,  
and give us the assurance that you can bring hope in our pain. **Amen.**

Jesus our Saviour,  
comfort us with the great power of your love  
as we mourn Kevin's sudden death.  
Give us a patient faith in this time of darkness,  
and help us to understand and know your ways.  
Strengthen us in our faith that he is with you for ever. **Amen.**