

*Eulogy delivered at the Funeral Mass for
The Late Ms Irene Madeline Joseph
Catholic Church of St Ignatius
9 December 2014*

United by our grief, united by our memories, united by our love, we all are here this morning to mourn the passing of this great lady, Irene Joseph.

I'm Yew Meng, a TK Band alumnus. To us – it doesn't matter if the alumnus is in his or her late 50's, or is a fine young chap or lady in his or her 20's – she's simply, or perhaps the right word is "respectfully", known as "Miss Joseph".

The word "respect" is appropriate – we remember the first time when we met her in the first week after joining the band. Most of us would have heard of her before actually meeting her, so we were in equal measures, "respectful" and "terrified". Well, to be honest, the measures weren't that equal!!! For her reputation preceded her: she was known to be very strict and she expected exacting standards from all band members.

Of course, after being in the band, we all realised that while she was tough on us, she was just as tough on herself. We could discern through her uncompromising drive, her passion for the band and its members! That motivated us to put in our very best.

And we also knew that she had a kind heart. The two Tanjong Katong schools drew academically inclined students mostly from the East. During the era when the country was still developing, there were many students who came from humble backgrounds; and many of them joined the band to learn music as their families could hardly afford private music lessons.

When she retired, we threw her a party in the Westin Stamford Hotel. When the mic was opened to the floor, I remembered a lady* who stood up. She conceded that public speaking wasn't her thing but that she had to express her gratitude – I can't exactly recall the words, but I remember her tremulous stammer; I also remember she had tears streaking down. She said, something along these lines: *"I really want to thank you, Miss Joseph. For helping me to pay my school fees and the occasional meal at the tuck-shop, you motivated me to work so much harder. Thank you for helping me and my parents through those difficult times!"*

As Miss Joseph joins the Good Lord and as we bid our final farewells to her, we weep; but yet, we all know her life was full; it had lots of joy and achievements, she created a legacy in TK Band that continues to be an inspiration to students!
So here now, to her life – we celebrate!

**This person is Tracy Koh (you can find her on FB); we spoke with her at the funeral.
She's now a happy grandmother.*