

Good evening, Archbishop Mansell, Dr. Griffin, Father Gary, Father Hector, Reverend Fathers, the administration, faculty, parents, family, friends, and fellow members of the class of 2017. Before I begin, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those teachers here tonight that have guided us all over the past four years toward this moment, serving as excellent examples of what it truly means to live by the core values of faith, character, community, excellence, and service. I would especially like to thank my family, as, if it weren't for them, I genuinely could not be here tonight. The sacrifices that they have made, and the commitment that they have shown to my education and wellbeing are certainly the predominant reason that I am able to speak to you from such a position tonight.

Now to my classmates, we did it! We have finally made it to St. Joseph's Cathedral, to an event we have been anticipating since our first day of freshman year. With just one look around, at the smiles, the beautiful architecture, and of course, our caps and gowns, it is obvious that tonight's graduation is a grand celebration of a milestone achievement. What may be less obvious, however, is exactly how we managed to get here seemingly so quickly, and how we will manage to move forward from this moment.

Just four short years ago, we walked through the front doors of St. Paul Catholic High School for the first time, as unassured, quieter, and even less confident versions of our current selves, and coming from a variety of backgrounds. Regardless of how we started, whether with twenty existing friendships from previous schools, or, like myself, knowing absolutely no one, there was one desire shared among all of us, and that was to become an active part of this great community. Since that first day, we have become connected to one another in a way that has not, and will not, be easily reversed. Despite any differences there may be among us, it is the similarities we share that have drawn us together in innumerable situations over the course of these four years.

To begin with, it is our common yearning for academic and scholastic excellence, that has seen this class earn the most remarkable of achievements, improving not only themselves, but our school, our communities, and even the world, in the process. To date, this class has sent several students to the international Artscience innovation workshop, placed multiple students at the top of the annual American Mathematics Competition, earned several Scholastic Art Awards, and most recently, earned impressive scholarships, and enrollment at some of the nation's most notable colleges and universities. Of course, all of this is only in addition to the everyday accomplishments of our students, including the

countless tests taken, MathXIs completed, and essays written that have led us toward this ultimate accomplishment, a St. Paul Catholic High School Diploma.

Impressive as this sounds, it is not only our academic achievements that have come to unite us, but also our shared passion for performing arts, athletics, and the teams that have now become our families. With constant support from said teams, and the coaches and directors that guided us along the way, we have been pushed to become the best versions of our selves that we could possibly be, whatever that may mean to each one of us. For some, it meant using God-given talents to lead our boys baseball team to a Class S Championship victory last spring, or winning outstanding production for a musical or contributing to a girls basketball NVL championship victory this past winter. For others, like myself, it meant accepting our God-given ineptitude at literally any sport, but joining a team anyway to become more involved in our school community, adopt a healthy and active lifestyle, and even form meaningful friendships and leadership skills along the way.

Lastly, our class has developed an ever-growing love for, and devotion to, Jesus Christ, the reason for our school, which has united us in a way that many students in other schools would not easily understand. Through participation in

daily prayers, as well as weekly and monthly masses, we have had plenty of opportunities to come together through formal worship, but what has been particularly impactful, is the way that our class has come together to actively improve the lives of Christ's people within our own community. Service has always been an incredibly important part of life at St. Paul, and especially for this class. We will never forget the way Tim Singler took on such an active role in each of our fundraising and collection efforts, sitting in his kayak each morning, yelling, and often singing, to lure in donations, and contributing to our class' consistently being a top performer in many can drives, toy drives, and other community outreach efforts. Through our service here at St. Paul, our class has not only been able to bond in quite a unique way, but incorporate service as a permanent aspect of our daily lives.

I speak on each of these areas in which we have excelled, academic, athletic, the arts and spiritual, not only to acknowledge and celebrate the success that we have had in coming together as a class, but to emphasize the extent to which each of us has grown as a human being, establishing a solid foundation here, so that we may succeed out there. After all, less than twenty-four hours from now, the 98 students graduating tonight will be heading down 98 different paths, physically leading toward a diverse lineup of geographic locations, as well

as metaphorically leading toward an even more diverse array of careers and lifestyles, which we will ultimately pursue. With the plethora of experiences that we have accumulated since the year 2013, we have managed to learn the importance of maintaining a strong academic record, building a healthy spiritual and physical lifestyle, and making connections with others for mutual benefit, all of which are certain to keep us from straying from our own unique path.

Although right now, this graduation may still seem to many of us to be a culmination of our life's work, an ultimate goal that we have finally reached, the reality is that we still do have an entire lifetime ahead of us. Regardless of how great an achievement this graduation may seem, not a single one of us has yet reached our peak in life. Despite all that we have worked for and accomplished thus far, not a single one of us has yet accomplished all the incredible feats which we are unmistakably still capable of. Lastly, not one of us has yet finished making our own uniquely significant impact, whether we know tonight, or decades from now, exactly what it is. What we do know now, is that it begins with St. Paul Catholic High School, and will affect far more lives than just those present tonight, becoming our lasting legacy on this earth.