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### Class President Graduation Address

Good evening Bishop Betancourt, Superintendent Griffin, Mr. DuPont, Mr. Cooper, Mr. Wallace, Reverend Fathers, faculty, staff, parents, family, friends, and most importantly, the Class of 2019. It is my honor to welcome you today to the Cathedral of St. Joseph, and to St. Paul Catholic High School's 50th Commencement Ceremony. Tonight, we will be celebrating the Class of 2019, and our efforts throughout the past 4 years. Serving as president of such a dedicated, driven, and talented class has been an honor and a pleasure, and has shaped the person I have become. Our class has worked extremely hard throughout our time as Falcons, and through our struggles and our triumphs, we have grown together to be a wonderful family of unique and talented individuals. We have much to be proud of as we celebrate the past 4 years tonight at our graduation ceremony.

Entering high school as freshmen was a daunting experience, and looking back now, it is clear to me how much we all have grown and matured. The excitement I felt upon entering St. Paul was immense, and after being welcomed by the strong, caring, and unified community that is our school, I knew I was home. We entered St. Paul as timid and immature freshmen. I remember all the hopes, expectations, and fears I held in my heart upon entering high school, and I am sure many of you felt the same sentiments. However, many people were able to light the way for us as we struggled to keep our heads above water. I remember being welcomed by kind, intelligent, and confident upperclassmen, who made the transition much easier and more comfortable. Now, as seniors, I see those same kind, intelligent, and confident faces in our class as I did on that very first day of high school. We have grown and matured to become reliable and compassionate adults, and in this past year I have seen many of us step into the responsibility of role model for the underclassmen. It has been immensely gratifying to see our class become so welcoming and compassionate in our interactions with underclassmen.

I am confident that the memories we have made collectively at St. Paul will last us a lifetime. I could never have imagined that the bond this class has created would become as strong as it has, but I am beyond grateful that it did. Each of these four years has brought new friendships, new memories, and new lessons. Some of my best friends are friends I made just this year, but the bond we have created is as strong as if I had known them since kindergarten. The Class of 2019 is special, and sharing high school together is something that we will all forever have in common. Whether it be standing in the lunch line, studying for tests, or cheering at games, we have been by each other's sides through good times and through bad times, and to me, that has been beautiful.

If our time at St. Paul has taught us anything, it is the importance of our five core values; faith, character, community, excellence, and service. These pillars of our school have been instilled in us since the day we stepped foot in St. Paul. I am confident I do not need to explain to you how these core values have manifested themselves in the St. Paul community. They are

made clear to us in the masses we share together as a school community or in our individual sports teams and clubs. They are made clear in the friends we have, who have made pep rallies, sports games, and dances all the more memorable. They are made clear in the teachers who go above and beyond every single day to not only teach math, science, and writing, but to teach hard work, compassion, and dedication. They are made clear in the countless service projects St. Paul students participate in so that we can leave the world a better place than we found it. Faith, character, community, excellence, and service have always been at the very core of who we are as a class and as a school community. But these core values will go much further than the walls of St. Paul. As soon-to-be graduates, we are forever impacted by these core values in our lives. I urge you all to continue to allow our core values to guide you in your journeys, as they will undoubtedly push you toward your fullest potential. Faith in God and in yourselves will carry you through any challenge you face in each of your individual paths to success. Having strong character in your interactions with others will allow you to establish yourself as unique and valuable in your studies, in your work, and in all of your relationships. Finding a community of supportive people wherever you go will make your successes much sweeter, and your hardships much more bearable. Striving for excellence in all you do will keep you on track, and will strengthen your determination and motivation as you move forward. And serving others will allow you to make a mark on your community and in our world, and to light the way for those in need.

Maya Angelou once said “Nothing can dim the light that shines from within.” In our time as Falcons these past four years, each of us has developed a light within us that will carry us through all of our future endeavors. As we move forward to new experiences in higher education, in the workforce, or in the military, we will likely feel a similar sense of uncertainty and fear as we did entering St. Paul as timid freshmen. But we must remember that just as we were able to grow and mature to be the kind, intelligent, and confident leaders who would light the way for future St. Paul students, we once again will blossom to be mentors who light the way for those who follow us in our individual paths. We must use that fire within us to spread positivity and strength to the people who need it. In doing so, we allow those following in our footsteps to develop their own internal fire and to use it to light the way for more to come. We must also continue to be willing to accept positivity and strength from our professors, mentors, peers, and family members when we ourselves are in need.

As our time at St. Paul comes to an end, I hope we can recall with love and appreciation all the people who have strengthened the light within each of us, and have made our experiences at St. Paul so remarkable. Each of us has contributed to the success of this class, and we all play a vital role in creating the myriad of memories we have shared throughout the years. I will forever be grateful to each of you for strengthening the light within me, and for allowing me to become the person I am today standing in front of you. We are, and we always will be Falcons, and we are forever changed because of the experiences we have shared as the Class of 2019. No matter where life takes us, we will always have a home inside the doors above which reads “Christ is the reason for this school.” We will always be a family, and we will always carry that within us. I

hope you all will continue to use our core values to guide you through your journey, and to light the way for those around you. The light within you can never be dimmed.