

Brianna Wood

Valedictorian Class of 2024

### Graduation Speech

Good evening Father Collins and Reverend Fathers, Mrs. Mara, Mr. Dupont, Mr. Cooper, Mr. Wallace, faculty, parents, family, friends, and the Class of 2024.

I am honored to be speaking here before you tonight on this momentous occasion. I would first like to extend an excited congratulations to the Class of 2024. It is hard to believe that our career at St. Paul Catholic High School takes on a new chapter tonight. These four years have made such an influence on my life, as I'm sure it has for each of you. I will forever cherish the many memories we have made both inside and outside of the classroom. I am so proud of the accomplishments you all have made throughout your journey here, and I look forward to hearing about each of your upcoming achievements.

These last four years would not have been possible without the encouragement of the family around us. Thank you to the parents, siblings, grandparents, and extended family members for your support from the start on your graduate's journey. You have built a strong foundation within each of us. Teachers, faculty, staff, administrators, and other mentors, we are grateful you have helped us prepare to soar to our next adventure. We wouldn't be here without you.

I extend a personal thank you to all who have encouraged me to pursue my dream of becoming a mathematics professor. Mathematics has numerous unique aspects, yet I have always been excited to delve into the stories behind numbers. I've learned that mathematics has the power to teach you about life.

God once promised to Abraham, "I will cause your descendants to become as numerous as the stars in the sky." Currently, each of us is just one person in this sky of stars.

Going off to bigger things, we may feel like we aren't that special in that vast sky, but I want to remind you: there is something unique inside all of you that makes you crucial to this world. Take the Fibonacci Sequence: each element of this pattern is merely a number. Together, however, they can create a beautiful picture. For example, the music we listen to has sounds only possible with note patterns from the Fibonacci Sequence. Inside each of us is an intricate pattern of perspectives, knowledge, and skills that comes together to create you. On the surface though, it may seem quite a few of us have similar activities and talents, yet note that the Fibonacci Sequence is also God's fingerprint, per Thomas Aquinas' fifth proof of God's existence. This sequence, when pictured, creates a spiral. God put that very spiral on everything he created, including each of us. Take a look at your fingerprint. No one else will have that. He's given you a pattern of gifts that are unique to you.

As we prepare to start the next chapter of our lives, it's time we bring your uniqueness to life. It may seem scary looking at the endless possibilities and outcomes of how something could happen. Most things in life don't have a set list of rules and steps to follow. For example, many mathematicians have proven the pythagorean theorem, though have done so in different ways. For physics problems, no question is able to be solved the same way as the one before it. Life is going to bring us through ups and downs, but you are going to take on the challenge and solve it in a way that only pertains to you. It's okay to try a new path when one doesn't work out. It's okay if you end up in a completely different spot than you were at before. Very few are going to take a path exactly like yours, and it's your mission to discover exactly how you will live out your destiny.

I implore each of you to use the knowledge you have learned over the years and the unique skill set gifted to you from

God to help the world around you. The biggest impact you can make on the world is one that lasts and is carried on through generations. One of my favorite types of problems in mathematics is solving quadratic equations. Using each number of our original function, we apply the quadratic formula to solve for the variable. As we go into the unknown, we're going to apply each part of us in the search for the solution. You are so important towards the journey in making the world a better place, for only you can make a difference. I should note the quadratic formula may give imaginary answers. We must realize that our hoped plan to improve the world around us may not feel possible at some moments, but I encourage you to never give up.

My younger self was impressed by how you can change the imaginary number  $i$  into a real number merely by multiplying the number by itself. Your ideas to impact the world may start out feeling imaginary. Sometimes when unsure about an idea,

it's hard to let it see the light of day, but that dream will stay hidden from the world if you decide to stop there. Multiply that idea's glow by passionately pursuing your goal and keeping your mind on the task at hand. You might just discover you can make it real.

In the end, we really aren't just one number in a sky of stars. Each person has their own personalities and passions, just like how each number is made up of its own properties.

Remember: God made us to be like stars, in ways more than just quantity. He instilled in us a quality special only to you- only you can shine that starlight. Eleanor Roosevelt once stated, "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." We're going to face adversity, that's life, but when we put our minds to it, just like the pursuit of a tough mathematics problem, nothing can diminish our effort to reach our goal.

When you follow your dreams, your possibilities are as endless as the stars in the sky. Thank you.