

Jordan Rinaldi

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Valedictorian Speech

Good evening Bishop Betancourt, Superintendent Griffin, Mr. DuPont, Mr. Cooper, Mr. Wallace, Reverend Fathers, faculty, staff, parents, family, friends and the Class of 2019. I would first like to thank Mr. DuPont, Mr. Wallace, Mr. Cooper, Mrs. Kendrick, and all of the other members of the faculty and staff for working tirelessly to prepare each of us for this monumental occasion in our lives. To each and every member of the St. Paul Catholic High School Class of 2019, whether or not you realize it, you have made an impact on me and on your peers. Your positive attitudes, willingness to reach out to others, and dedication to your passions are some of the many reasons why this class has been so successful and why I am absolutely honored to represent you all today.

I would like to take this moment along with my fellow graduates to thank our parents, our grandparents, our extended families, and our close family friends for giving us unwavering support and unconditional love throughout our lives and especially during our four years at St. Paul. It may often go unnoticed, but the support we receive from them is what has allowed us to reach this milestone. From giving us rides to school and extracurricular activities, to being our biggest fans at every school function, to embracing our goals and going to whatever means necessary to help us achieve them: families are truly the catalyst for our success, and there is nothing that I can say tonight that fully expresses the gratitude we have for all the families of the Class of 2019.

For those of us who have lost special people while at St. Paul, like my grandfather, who we lost last year, I know that each and every one of

them are here with us tonight on this blessed evening enjoying the view from heaven.

As part of the Class of 2019, I am so proud of what we have accomplished. We came into St. Paul in the fall of 2015 as individuals and we leave now as a unified family. We have succeeded not only in the classroom, but in all of our passions. We all share a desire for excellence, and it gives me great joy to know that we have left our mark on the history of St. Paul. We are the 50th graduating class of St. Paul Catholic High School. We have proudly carried on the legacy of this school in a way no other class can say they have.

All of us bring different abilities to the table. On the first day of senior year, which now feels like yesterday, Mrs. Kendrick spoke to us and labeled our class as GPS's, or gifted, promising seniors. St. Paul's five core values of faith, character, community, excellence, and service, as well as our own collective efforts, have enabled us to achieve the best versions of ourselves in order to live up to the title of gifted, promising seniors. Like with a GPS, we were given many possible paths to achieve our high school goals, and each of our individual paths have converged here on this special evening, as the climax of our high school experience.

We excelled on the path of academics. From day one, each of us put our best foot forward in an effort to see ourselves and our peers succeed. We pushed ourselves to take courses that we knew would challenge us, but with the support of our peers as well as others, we succeeded in our studies. The Class of 2019 received acceptances to over 150 colleges and universities, and all of us should feel a sense of accomplishment in our academic triumphs.

We excelled on the path of athletics. Over the past four years, our gifted, promising seniors have played major roles with their respective sports teams to lead the falcons to multiple conference championships,

and even a state championship. But above all the wins we have had, and there are a lot of them to be proud of, - the greatest takeaway I had as a member of several sports teams is the bonds we developed with the members. It becomes less like a team, and more like a family, and you as members of the Class of 2019 and as athletes, should be incredibly proud of the fact that you positively contributed to the life of the school in that way.

We excelled on the path of the performing arts. Many of you sitting here today are the reason why St. Paul has kept its reputation as one of the most highly praised drama departments in the state. Your hard work, dedication, and leadership does not go unnoticed, and you have helped continue the path for future generations of performers that will step foot on the St. Paul stage.

Finally, we excelled on the path of service. The senior class collectively logged **5896** hours during our upperclassmen years. From Blue Key Club to the March for Life to the BARC Prom, our gifted, promising seniors have certainly left their mark on the community. We have embraced our core value of service and it has become a way of life for us to share our gifts and our talents to those who will benefit from them.

Although our paths have all converged here tonight, the next path for each of us is one we will travel on our own, separate from the other members of the Class of 2019 and from the comfort of our St. Paul Catholic home. It may seem scary now; you may not think you are ready, and you don't want to leave behind what you have accumulated in your years at St. Paul. However, it doesn't matter what path you have chosen: whether you are going to a four year college, community college, joining the armed forces or joining the workforce, the most important thing I can tell you today, the Class of 2019, is this: Don't just work hard at your immediate task, work hard at everything you do.

Work hard at being a friend. Work hard at being a son or daughter, at being a grandchild, at being a steward in your community, at caring about people who have never had a day like the one we are having today. Work hard at being the best version of yourself that you can possibly be. All of you. There will be more moments in your life like tonight, a celebration of the culmination of years of hard work, surrounded by family and friends. We know, there will be moments when you feel alone, misunderstood and hopeless. There will be false starts and wrong turns. But that's okay. That is all part of the adventure, and ours starts tonight.

In times of struggle and despair, do not hesitate to turn to the Lord for guidance. God is always present in our lives, and I know this personally because I can see God's eternal love for me in my friends and in my family. A wise man once told me that we are never given a challenge that God did not think we could handle. Take this to heart, because there will be times when this message seems impossible, as obstacles become seemingly insurmountable. In these times, never forget the support of your families and friends, and turn to the Lord, for it is known through the Beatitudes, you will be comforted and you will not be disappointed. Finally, my fellow classmates, dream big. There is no doubt in my mind that there are no limits to what the Class of 2019 can achieve, and I know this not only because that is the motto of our senior sweatshirts, but also because I have had the blessing of sharing in your experiences and seeing the unlimited potential each of you hold.

In all of this, stop and take a moment to reflect on the journey so far, and the journey to come. If your experience was anything like mine, high school seems to have lasted no more than a few days. You will never have another high school graduation, so at some point tonight, take the time to remember the memories, and take the time to thank the people who have made an impact on your life. Life moves so fast that

we often forget to take a step back and really take everything in. So among all the joy and celebration in the next several hours, do not fail to recognize all the good that you have succeeded in carrying out and that you are capable of doing in your future.

Although tonight is celebrating an end, it is also opening a beginning. Never forget that success is the result of diligent work, and no example is greater for us than tonight. Wherever life takes you, remember to put your best foot forward, put your faith in the Lord, and dream big. It has been my dream since the day I stepped foot on campus as a freshman to speak at graduation, and today I am living that dream. Allow the Lord to be your GPS and continue to follow the path that makes you a gifted, promising person that has so much to offer our world. There are no limits to what the Class of 2019 can achieve. So let's enjoy tonight and celebrate all we have done and all that is yet to come. Thank you.