

Good evening Superintendent Mara, Mr. DuPont, Mr. Cooper, Mr. Wallace, Reverend Fathers, faculty, staff, parents, family, friends, and my fellow classmates. Welcome to the St. Paul Catholic High School Graduation Ceremony for the Class of 2022.

I would like to recognize the entire St. Paul community, especially our administration, faculty and staff. Thank you for instilling in us the importance of hard work, compassion, positivity, and faith to guide us throughout our lives. Thank you for helping us when we needed it and for working tirelessly under extreme circumstances to provide us the best education we could have received over the past four years.

I would also like to thank all of the families of the class of 2022, and specifically our parents. You have seen us at our best and our worst and have taught us that we can do whatever we put our minds to. You gave us encouragement when we were nervous and you were with us every step of the way throughout our high school journey. To the class of 2022, we finally did it! All of the time we spent in the classroom, on the field, and on the stage has come to this moment: graduation!

Having this honor to speak to you this evening, I started looking for inspiration for this speech by talking to family members and friends and a phrase I often heard during this search was “this is the beginning of a new chapter.” This phrase made me think what will after graduation look like? Undoubtedly, each of us will have new experiences and opportunities. The scary part is, none of us know exactly what is in store for this next great chapter of our lives.

Luckily, we have the values and lessons we have learned throughout the past four years to guide us. While we might not need the Pythagorean theorem or an analysis of Aristotle’s works on a day to day basis, we will always use the core values of faith, character, community, excellence and service to navigate our daily decisions.

During our time at St. Paul, we have all grown so much. We can all remember when we entered the St Paul auditorium for our first assembly, with equal parts of nerves and excitement not knowing what to expect: and then Mr. Dupont said “Welcome home.” This was the start of our new chapter in our lives here at St. Paul’s. While we may have been skeptical on that day especially since we may not have known

many people, we definitely built a community, a family, and a home here at St. Paul. These relationships we have made will be ones we will carry with us throughout our lives. It is important to know that even as we meet new people during this next chapter, we can turn to our friends we have made here if we are ever in need, whether we are struggling or just need a friend who knows us best. We also cannot forget the memories we have made with our class: eating ice cream at the Walkathon, dancing at homecoming, and even completing assignments in the cafeteria after school before practice. **All of these memories and friendships have helped get us to where we are today and we will not forget them when we walk out of these doors.**

Beyond this, as Catholics and as members of the St. Paul community we are called to do acts of service and help others. While it will no longer be a box to check on a list of requirements to graduate it is a great chapter to continue to be developed in each of our books. Service can help us learn empathy and respect for others rather than thinking only of ourselves. Michelle Obama once said, “Service is a limitless opportunity, it is the reason why we breathe.” There are no bounds to the

work we can do and the impact we can make on the world when we serve others. It can be an act as small as holding a door open for someone, to going on a mission trip to help those in need across the globe. Any act you do can create positive change and can influence others. As you go forward, think “How can I help others, and how can I make a difference?” The answer to these questions will be all you need to guide you on the right path towards love and kindness in this upcoming chapter.

However, right now as we graduate, it may feel as though this particular chapter is ending in a cliffhanger. We do not always know where the future will lead us, and that is okay. It is important that we know in these situations that we can turn to God for the guidance that we need. As in Jeremiah 29:11 “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord. ‘Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’” There will be moments in all of our lives when we feel lost or consumed by fear or worry, but through St. Paul, our faith has been strengthened and we know that we can give our hearts

to Christ and He will help us when we are in need. We are called to follow Christ's mission for us each and every day.

With Christ by our side, a new chapter is fast approaching. This is no time to set your book aside and take a break. The person who puts down their book rather than continuing on will miss out. They will not learn more about what the world has to offer, they will not see the resolution of their story, and most importantly they will not see their full potential reached. Do not be the person who sets their book down.

Instead, use all that you have learned - and what you will learn - to tackle whatever comes next. There will be fantastical journeys with obstacles along the way, but like any protagonist, we will be able to overcome them. Take every opportunity you can, and do your best to help to change the world. This next chapter is so much more than words printed on a page in a novel. It is your story. Rather than put down **your** book, keep writing to see what will come next. I challenge you to write a story that when others read it, it is one that is filled with friendship, service, and faith. Thank you.

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