

Good evening! On behalf of the Class of 2022, the school board, administration, faculty and staff, we welcome you to the 53rd Commencement Exercises for St. Paul Catholic High School. How exciting and inspiring it is to be in-person in this magnificent Cathedral of St. Joseph, the mother church of the Archdiocese of Hartford. For this beautiful and special occasion, we give our collective thanks to Almighty God.

INVOCATION

To begin tonight's program, I call upon the Rev. Glen Dmytryszyn, St. Paul Catholic High School's chaplain, to deliver the invocation.

Fr. Glen will be leaving us after serving as St. Paul chaplain the past two years to focus on his recent assignment at Our Lady of the Assumption Church in Woodbridge. Fr. Glen, we thank you and wish you well with your parish responsibilities and know you're always welcome to visit us.

GREETINGS FROM THE ARCHDIOCESE OF HARTFORD

Bringing greetings from the Archdiocese of Hartford is Mrs. Valerie Mara, Superintendent, Center for Catholic Education & Formation.

We are grateful to the Rev. Michael Whyte, Vicar, Mrs. Mara, Mrs. McCaffrey and all at the Center for Catholic Education & Formation for their valued guidance and partnership. Val, thank you!

WELCOME

I'd like to take a moment to acknowledge some special invited guests in attendance this evening. Rev. Matthew Collins '12, who you will hear from later and Rev. Joseph Crowley, sitting with his family ... thank you for your presence this evening.

A warm welcome is extended to Mrs. Eileen Regan, former president of Sacred Heart High School, and currently a consultant and member of the St. Paul school board. In addition, there are also some former Sacred Heart High School faculty in attendance this evening, sitting to my left. Your presence is a testament to the commitment and love of your former students. On their behalf, thank you for being here and making a difference in their lives.

To Mr. James Cooper, Mr. Al Wallace, other members of my administrative team, distinguished St. Paul faculty and staff, thank you for your tireless efforts to deliver on our collective promise to be a truly great Catholic high school. Never more was your caring servant ministry of faith, mercy and love tested than during the unexpected adversity of the last two and a half years. Teaching has never been harder ... thank you! Please stand.

To the Class of 2022, tonight, we celebrate each of you, fully understanding that this milestone moment didn't come easy, acknowledging for some it may have even been harder than for others. However, the path that has led you to this point was not meant to be simple or easy for anyone, but instead it was meant to be enlightening. While the effort and accomplishments these

past four years are ultimately yours, they were not achieved alone, that's why your family, friends, teachers and coaches ... why all of us here share in your celebration.

For the decision to send you to attend St. Paul ... for the selfless sacrifices they have made ... for the unconditional love and encouragement they have given you ... for the times that you may have unintentionally taken them for granted along this journey ... I ask you to stand and thank your parents, grandparents, guardians for this proud moment.

Some of our parents are first generation alumni who have sons and daughters graduating this evening. Thank you for passing down the St. Paul tradition from one generation to the next. Please stand and be recognized.

Finally, I extend a warm welcome to everyone watching this graduation ceremony being live streamed this evening throughout our extended Falcon Nation. As we all come together, I offer my personal and sincere thanks, on many fronts, to everyone for making this memorable evening in our students lives possible.

SCRIPTURE READING

This evening's scripture reading will be proclaimed by Nathan Paul Stellmach.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

The responsorial psalm will be sung by Sarah Rose Lindquist.

SALUTATORY ADDRESS

The salutatory address will be delivered by Gabriel Louis Duncan.

MUSICAL SELECTION – *"Friends"*

PRESENTATION OF SPECIAL AWARDS

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS

The valedictory address will be delivered by Gillian Rose Smith.

PRESENTATION OF DIPLOMAS

Gillian and Gabe, thank you ... beautiful reflections defining your class's high school journey and the road that lays before you. I enjoyed listening to your perspective and sound advice for continued success.

I'd be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the unforeseen and unusual adversity, change in Gabe's words, members of the Class of 2022 endured and the perseverance needed to arrive here this evening. Four years ago, you began your high school careers, for many of you that was at St. Paul, for some Sacred Heart, Chase Collegiate or even someplace else.

What you, or any of us for that matter, didn't realize on that first day was that your high school years would look very different than anything ever experienced in education. A word we never heard of, COVID, would become part of our everyday vocabulary. Remote learning took on a new significance, quarantine protocols and masks became part of our everyday existence. And then for some of you, last spring you needed to unexpectedly look for a new school, a new home for your senior year. Thank you for choosing St. Paul.

But who can say they saw any of this adversity coming?

I mentioned earlier that the path that has led you to this point was not meant to be simple or easy for anyone, and indeed it wasn't, but instead it was meant to be enlightening. An enlightening journey intended to increase your knowledge across many disciplines, to expand WHAT you know but equally, if not more so, also focused on self-reflection and personal growth, to define WHO you are.

Albert Einstein once said, "adversity introduces a man to himself." Oh, how true that is ... although it's not the adversity itself but how one responds that ultimately defines them. Your response to the inconveniences, disappointments and even heartaches the last few years tells you a lot about yourself. Your response to these unplanned adversities was one of open mindedness, acceptance, determination, and perseverance. For the most part, these adversities did not derail you along your path but instead challenged you to just keep moving forward.

So as Gillian said so eloquently, tonight isn't so much an ending but the beginning of a new chapter in your lives. As you do, reflect upon your unfulfilled potential and concern yourselves not with what you have accomplished, as impressive as that might be, but with what is still possible for you to do and believe in your inherent potential for greatness that comes with being made in the image and likeness of God.

You are in a different place than when you first arrived at St. Paul, whether that was four years ago or just last fall. But our journey together wasn't just to prepare you for tonight ... instead it's been to prepare you for the rest of your life. May our core values of faith, character, community, excellence and service remain an integral part of your living fabric.

And if you've learned anything from your high school experience, I hope it's having a greater understanding and appreciation that everything in life is not a given and that life itself is a precious gift from God.

We are called as educated people to transform others by our example. That is why you graduate from St Paul with both a diploma, attesting to the knowledge gained, that is the WHAT you learned and a servant towel given to you by Archbishop Blair last night at our Baccalaureate Mass, that is the WHO you are ... reminding you to use that knowledge to serve others.

Tonight, my personal wish for you is to live a life filled in abundance with faith, hope and love as Nate proclaimed, a life filled with found purpose and passion; a life filled with gratitude, the healthiest of all human emotions; a life filled with hard work striving for excellence; a life filled with deep concern for others, a life so filled with conviction and the values of Jesus Christ that people everywhere will know more peace, more joy, more self-respect because they have come in contact with you.

Well done thy good and faithful servants, you have persevered and even thrived during the most challenging of times. But now the time has come for you to leave the comfort of the nest, to spread your Falcon wings and soar across this world following the exciting and diverse plans that lay in front of you. May God bless you all as your journey ... your story continues.

It was fifty years ago that I walked down this aisle and sat in your seats ... waiting for this very moment. This moment is now yours.

Mrs. Mara, having fulfilled the requirements for graduation as set forth by St. Paul Catholic High School, the Archdiocese of Hartford, and the State of Connecticut, as president and an alum of this school, it gives me great pleasure to present to you for the purposes of granting diplomas, the class of two thousand twenty-two.

BENEDICTION

Congratulations one last time to the Class of 2022 ... you made it!

Tonight's benediction will be delivered by the Rev. Matthew Collins '12 and a school board member. It was in walking down this aisle at his St. Paul graduation ten years ago that Fr. Matt felt the call to consider serving a life in the priesthood. For that, we are very grateful.

IRISH BLESSING

RECESSIONAL