

Calista Oria

26 May 2023

Salutatory Address

Good evening Superintendent Mara, Mr. Dupont, Mr. Cooper, Mr. Wallace, Reverend Fathers, faculty, staff, parents, families, friends, and the Class of 2023. As this year's salutatorian, it is my privilege to welcome all of you to the graduation ceremony for St. Paul Catholic High School's Class of 2023. On behalf of my class, I would first like to extend my warmest regards to each and every one of the attendees for being here this evening to share in this very special occasion. Your support as mentors and role models to look up to helped mold us into the people we are today.

And now, to the Class of 2023, congratulations! Tonight is a night of celebration. It is the culmination of our hard work and dedication we have put forth during our past four years. Although we were not aware of it our freshman year, our time together would propel us toward a trajectory of immense growth, and I want to emphasize how proud I am of all of us for our many accomplishments and for reaching this significant milestone in our lives.

I am aware that, for many of us, reaching this milestone was not easy. As if it were a tidal wave, the high school experience swept us in a whirlpool of directions — toward different friends, passions, and experiences, that it may have all felt overwhelming at times. We were simply sailors on a ship in this journey called life, forced to expect the unexpected and to try to adjust our path accordingly as we trekked through unfamiliar waters. Nevertheless, with each passing year, we rode the waves. We persisted and we overcame, and, through our resilience, ultimately ended up in the place we were supposed to be.

We are a class of extraordinary backgrounds, personalities, perspectives, and interests. From all-state athletes to musicians who can play at least three instruments to even a licensed private pilot, we are a well-rounded class that is talented all across the board. These various skills and achievements are what makes our class, the Class of 2023, unique. However, what distinguishes our class as truly remarkable is our shared enthusiasm to better ourselves in every aspect of our lives, whether it be academically, spiritually, or socially. I believe that it is this very drive that has enabled us to navigate these unpredictable seas — that has empowered us to not only steer our own path but to also help guide those we meet along the

way. This very drive is what has personally inspired me in my own day-to-day life, and I thank you, my fellow classmates, for the impact that you have had on my growth.

Life will by no means become any easier beyond high school. As Eric Matthews from the classic '90s TV show *Boy Meets World* used to joke, “Life’s tough. Get a helmet.” While, unfortunately, there is no literal helmet that can safeguard us from the obstacles we will inevitably face, the experiences and lessons we have gained throughout high school are a sturdy foundation for approaching adversity in the future.

When faced with difficult decisions, let St. Paul’s core values of faith, character, community, excellence, and service, as well as Christ’s teachings, act as your compass in those rough seas. By adhering to such high moral standards, you will be able to see with unmistakable clarity the path you are meant to embark on and the people you are meant to bring alongside you on that journey. Do not let the tidal waves of negative peer pressure deter you from your aspirations. Remember that you are the captain of your own ship, and steer clear of those kinds of influences. Instead, surround yourself with a supportive group of friends who will push you to reach your fullest potential professionally, intellectually, and personally.

Furthermore, carry on the enthusiasm to improve what you established in high school in everything you do moving forward. Show enthusiasm toward your education, your peers, and, most importantly, your hardships. Attitude is a double-edged sword. If it is grounded in enthusiasm rather than defeat, it can be a formidable force that can overpower any obstruction in our way.

We as a class saw first-hand the strength that lies behind an enthusiastic mindset when we were the first class to, as freshmen, place second in the hallway decoration contest and, as juniors, win the end-of-the-year beach day. I believe that these are a testament to our class's devotion to excel in all the things we do and are a reflection of the tight-knit community we built over the past four years. As sailors navigating the seas of high school, we persisted through extreme tides and came out triumphant. As a community, we embraced new clubs and cherished old ones, we fought hard on the fields and courts to accomplish many different types of wins, and we shined on stage with talent that brought our productions to the next level. Embedded in all of these victories was our enthusiasm, which, if applied into our future endeavors, can produce worthwhile results.

A sailor's journey, similar to one's life, oscillates between moments of turbulence and moments of tranquility. Enjoy the days of sun, warmth, and gentle breezes that arise every so often, and be patient with yourself when the currents don't necessarily flow your way. Although you cannot foresee every possible complication you will come across, you have the ability to make use of the lessons you've learned along the way to help you maneuver uncharted territory.

Our high school experience — four years of which encompass some of our happiest memories, as well as some of our most difficult trials — has now officially reached its end. As you reflect on your individual journeys, take the time to acknowledge how much you have evolved during these past four years and be proud of the person you have become. This evolution serves as proof that you have matured and are now ready to face the world ahead of you. Go out into your next journey with great enthusiasm. Thank you.