



SAINT MARY'S SCHOOL

COMMENCEMENT 2018

Remarks to Graduates from Head of School Brendan J. O'Shea

May 20, 2018

Today is a momentous day for you – perhaps one of the most important days of your life thus far. This will be a day you remember. May 20, 2018. Ironically, exactly 34 years ago today – to the minute – I received my college diploma. It is a day I remember. So yes, this is a day you too will remember. I would like to share with you this morning three reasons why I hope you will remember this day for the rest of your life.

#1

Well – this one is obvious, and you've certainly heard it before. It's graduation, or commencement, more formally. To me, graduation seems like the ending – it's final – there is no more. You've done all you can at Saint Mary's (as a student, that is). There are no more high-school level courses you can take, no more high school productions to act in, teams to play on, groups to sing in, etc. Commencement, of course, is quite the opposite. It's the start – the beginning of a new adventure. It's a new chapter. And while starting all over again can seem daunting, overwhelming, exhausting and downright scary – it's also exciting, energizing and invigorating. Concentrate on the positive sides of starting again – of beginning, of commencing. You've done it before, you're experienced. So – get after it. As Ms. Grasso encouraged you – go make it happen! You're plenty capable.

Reason #2

The second reason why I hope you will vividly remember this day is because undoubtedly you are happy. Alright – that should be obvious too. What I want you to think about, seniors, is why you are happy today. The reason I want you to reflect on your own happiness is because happiness itself comes in many different forms. There is fleeting happiness which typically accompanies something you've been given. And then there is lasting happiness which usually comes with something you have earned.

Think about the gifts you've been given through the years – toys, clothes, iPod Touches, an iPhone 5, 6, 7, 8 or 10 (whatever they're on now), perhaps even a car. All of these gifts are fleeting – the toys are broken, either you've outgrown the clothes or they are out of style, iPod touches are virtually extinct, iPhones keep getting updated, and cars eventually wear out too. These gifts brought you fleeting happiness – a happiness that doesn't last.

Today, you are happy because you have earned something. You have earned a Saint Mary's diploma. You have put forth tremendous effort to get to this point – all for a reason. Think about your happiest moments during your time at Saint Mary's – finishing that AP exam, turning in that research paper, completing that recital, ringing the bell after another varsity victory, standing on stage as the curtain closes on another phenomenal performance – these are the happy times and memories that will last forever. And you earned them. Because you earned them, they will bring you lasting, eternal happiness. Remember, too, that someone made this experience possible for you. Someone sacrificed for you to be here. Be sure to thank that person or persons today as they have contributed to your

happiness. So, reason number two for remembering this day is this feeling of happiness; you've earned this feeling.

Reason #3

Finally, the third reason I hope you will remember today is because it is Pentecost. As Rev. Bonner-Stewart explained in the Baccalaureate Service this morning, Pentecost, which comes ten days after the ascension of Jesus to heaven, celebrates the descent of the Holy Spirit from the heavens to Jesus' disciples and other followers. It is a coincidence that Pentecost coincides with Commencement this year. Since Easter travels on the calendar annually, it is actually rare that Pentecost aligns with Saint Mary's Commencement.

The Holy Spirit is omnipresent and permanent in our lives. It is much like the Spirit of Saint Mary's – also omnipresent and permanent in our lives. You will take the Spirit of Saint Mary's with you today, and it will remain with you for the rest of your life. The Saint Mary's Spirit is strong and lasting. You, in fact, are the Saint Mary's Spirit. You are strong and lasting.

The Saint Mary's spirit is defined by: friendliness, civility, compassion, inclusion, care, truth, honesty, generosity, humility, equity, respect, gratitude, effort, resiliency, diversity, perseverance, joy, and love. Okay – those are 18 words to describe the Saint Mary's Spirit for the Class of 2018.

So, in summary, remember today for three reasons:

1. it's commencement – time to start something new;
2. you're happy today – it is a lasting happiness that will endure forever because you have earned it ;
3. the Spirit of Saint Mary's – may it be with you and guide you as you continue life's journey.

Good luck – Class of 2018.

Come back often, and thanks for an amazing year.