

Commencement

Superintendent Cheng, Members of the Board of Regents, Members of the Faculty, Graduates, Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for your presence in this sacred space, on this most blessed evening.

My esteemed colleagues and peers in the Faculty and staff, before you, once again, sit the individual products of your incredible love for students and your profound commitment to this ministry. Well done.

Thank you parents, guardians, grandparents, and supporters of this fine class. This Catholic high school diploma bears the name of an individual student, but it represents the immeasurable sacrifice, love, patience, and care that has been poured forth by every single family here.

Members of the class of 2023...

Pentecost, which we celebrated just a few days ago, is the moment when the followers of Christ, are finally, irresistibly, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Fifty days after Jesus' resurrection at Easter, and just ten days after his ascension, they are huddled again, together in 'the Upper Room,' contemplating their next move

Again grasping for the courage to enter the next phase of their ministry. Even they, who walked with Christ himself, are anxious; afraid.

And the Holy Spirit, the animating force of the Church on Earth, arrives as a might wind.....

And from that moment, two thousand years ago, just a roomful of women and men, transform the earth.

Graduates, this evening as we stand in the shadow of this great Mission, we can affirm that in it's essence, the point of a Catholic high school education is to help you frame the ultimate questions:

‘why do I exist?’ ‘what am I called to do?’ and ‘who do I want to become?’; and to stoke the desire for truth;

to send you out into the world with that same, Pentecostal, courage to transform the earth.

For almost all of us, when we arrive in high school, at age 13 or 14; our ‘why?’ our purpose, our meaning, is simply to live safely, predictably, in accordance to the wishes of family, teachers, coaches, and especially our peers;

Almost all are incapable at that age of consistently thinking about our life, much beyond the next few hours or days.

So, we follow their rules (especially the social ones): don’t stand out, don’t leave the safety of the herd.

However, the four years of High school is the time when we all begin to change in this regard.

And it doesn't take long for a more resistant, defiant spirit, to present.

These are the early adopters, who, even as freshmen, begin to resist against those norms and rules.

I gaze with no small measure of admiration upon the early adopters in the class of 2023.

They knew something was up, following someone else's rules (especially the school rules) feels wrong.

Oh, how many times in the past four years, have I heard from a student: "why do I have to do that, Mr. Susank? That is stupid."

Well, you may not believe me (and admittedly, I do often need to remind myself in these moments) but this is an AWESOME conversation.

'Why?' indeed?

'Why do we have that rule?'

'Why do I need to be on time?'

'Why do I need to dress modestly?'

'Why do I need to work so hard?'

'Why are you so up tight?'

'Why do you put so much emphasis on grades?'

‘Why do you put so much emphasis on college?’

Yes, I cheer (quietly to myself of course). Seek those answers! Scrutinize those rules! Question them, challenge them, demand an explanation, demand multiple explanations. That is the truth that you are seeking, Amen and Alleluia!

Because we adults, the unspoken secret we all guard, is that *blindly* following someone else’s rules IS appropriate for children.

Well, graduates, today is the day.
Very shortly, class of 2023, you get to write some of your own rules.

And to decide for yourself, what are the rules by which that you choose to be governed?

Yes, to blindly follow a rule is the stuff of childhood. But caution.... to live without rules is not a good idea.

‘but Why Mr. Susank?’

Hopefully, we, your MCP community have given you clear sight, so that you can peer into your own future.

Behold, and you can begin now to see, who you are today, is not who you will be tomorrow. Who you are tomorrow, is not who you will be in a decade.

In this real sense, you, me, all of us, we are not just one person. We are each a community of people. That community is ourselves-today, but also our self at age 80, and every day in between.

The rules that you write should be thought of as the guardrails on the road to the person you wish to become; and they will be anchored in the answer to your ultimate 'why?'

'Why do I exist' and 'what am I called to do?' and 'who do I wish to become?'

What we, who care so much for you, have endeavored over these past four years is to help each of you build an answer to that question of 'why?'

It is, our hope that when you return to these existential questions, the answers will echo to you from your every experience at MCP and at home-

That you are loved

That you are wonderfully made

That in this life, your capacity for growth never ceases

That you, and you alone, have a unique role to play in this flawed and beautiful life

That you are called to live a life for others, including in service to your future self

That, who you truly are, your soul, endures beyond this life,
That you have a calling to exist for all eternity with God in
heaven

So, reflect at this moment, as the primary author of your life, at
this time of Pentecost, of launch, of Commencement, reflect
with one eye on who you are now, and more importantly one
eye upon who you are still called to be.

Believe in who you are now, and with even greater conviction,
in your future self.

Love who you are now, and even more deeply, who you are
going to become.

Remember, as the Jesuit scientist, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin
dared to proclaim, that “we are not human beings having a
spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human
experience.”

And so, choose your rules that will bolster the unshakable
hope, that regardless of what this life presents to you, you are
destined to everlasting life, with God in heaven.

Class of 2023, like the disciples at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit is
an unquenchable spark.

Congratulations. Go now, and bring your fire to the world!