

Thank you Ms. Boyle, teachers, class of 2018, friends and family. I want to especially thank all the teachers who taught me during my time at OLA and continue to teach here: Ms. Konoir, Mrs. Cortez, Mrs. Myers, Mr. Ortiz, Mr. Capraro, Mrs. Columbus Mrs. Coleman, Ms. Kay, and Mrs. Lawrence. The dedication of each of these teachers and their commitment to my success has continued to impact my life, even 12 years after I graduated from OLA.

I want to first start off with a short story:

One day, little Johnny and his father were visiting a Church, much like OLA. As Johnny was walking down the middle aisle his eyes caught a bit of colored light shining onto the ground.

Looking up, he saw these beautiful stained glass windows with images of people decorating the windows.

Johnny looked at his Father and asked him, “Who are they?”

The father replied, “Those are the saints!” Johnny continued to marvel at the images until they left.

That following Sunday, Johnny was sitting in the children’s liturgy class and the teacher asked the class, “Does anyone know who the saints are?”

Remembering his conversation with his dad, Johnny’s hand shot up in the air “OOH OOH PICK ME!” “yes Johnny?” “The saints are the ones that the light shines through!”

Graduates, just like the light passing through the stained glass can illuminate the Church with many different colors, the saints have illuminated the world by allowing the light of Christ to pass through themselves.

Through their love for God and each other and their work serving those in need, the light of Christ passes through them and can brighten the world.

I am sure you can think of many saints who have done this from St. John Paul II, to St. Mother Teresa, to St. Francis of Assisi, to St. Damien.

Each has done seemingly extraordinary things to attain the distinction of sainthood. However, this call to bear the light of Christ does not fall just to those that bear the title of saint,

it also falls to us.

As we have seen with the saints, the source of their light,

the light of Christ,

is the same,

but the color with which they illuminate the world is unique to their person.

St. John Paul II was a lover of the youth, St. Mother Teresa fell in love with the poor in Calcutta, St. Francis of Assisi had a special place for animals and St.

Damien dedicated his life to the lepers. We are called to also bear this light, but not just in the way of the saints before us, rather we can illuminate the world with a color all our own.

This is something that God is calling you to do right now, as future high school students and eighth grade graduates from OLA. The light of Christ already shines through each one of you. It is not just something that comes in the future when you enter high school or college, or get a job, or get married and have children. This call to sainthood, to illuminate the world with the light of Christ, is a call for you to live out right now.

One of my favorite quotes comes from the theologian Fredrick Buechner. It says, “Your vocation in life is where your greatest joy meets the world’s greatest need.”

This quote has 2 objectives for you.

1. To find your greatest joys, your greatest passions, what you love doing. And
2. To find the greatest needs of the world or of your community.

OLA has a great foundation for both of these pursuits.

I still remember doing current event assignments in Mr. Ortiz’s class that taught me to be aware of what was going on in the world.

Or Mrs. Myers math classes that encouraged me to see the beauty of the world through numbers and math.

Or even Mrs. Cortez’s pestering of my parents when she found out they wouldn’t let their only son go to the homecoming dance.

Your teachers have formed you to allow you to discover and pursue your passions to their fullest extent.

I remember the religion classes, the Imago Dei project, and Mrs. Columbus’s random life lessons in which I was exposed to the needs of my society and the needs of the world.

This is by no means a finished product.

You are only just beginning on this path of self-discovery and sainthood, of finding what brings you the most joy, and how you can serve the world with your gifts.

I encourage you to be open to new opportunities,

do things outside of your comfort zone,

travel the world,

try new foods,

don’t be afraid of unknown situations,

and

through it all,

be attentive to what brings you joy.

Through high school and college I had always thought I wanted to be a doctor, or a scientist researching medicine.

I also had this love of going on service trips, and seeing new cultures but always thought it was a nice side activity to go along the more prestigious goals.

It was not until I came to the realization that travelling and working with the poor was something that brought me joy

and that it was okay for me to pursue this joy

that I was able to shift from graduating with a biochemistry degree to pursuing a masters in theology while focusing on international development.

So, find what brings you joy.

That is the unique color with which you can illuminate the world with.

Then, find how your joy can best serve the greatest needs of the world.

Through this you can find your unique color and illuminate the world with God's presence in a way that only you can.

And, as St. Catherine of Sienna says, "Be who God made you to be, and you will set the world on fire."