

*Lexington Catholic High School  
Baccalaureate Mass  
Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity  
May 17, 2009*

Class of 2009, it's a true privilege and a deep joy for me to address you on your Graduation Day. Today is a day for congratulations and good wishes, a time of giving thanks to God for what has been and hope for what is yet to come. It is a day of saying goodbye to your high school education and of embracing the next phase of your life long formation and education.

I want to say "Thank you" to our graduating seniors. Each one of you added your unique and varied gifts to make Lexington Catholic a better school, a better academic institution, a better community of faith, a better community of service, a better community of friends.

Thank you to the members of the Board of Trustees for the care, the expertise and the direction you give to the school and its mission.

Thank you to the faculty and administration for your remarkable dedication and tireless service.

Thank you, parents, for choosing Catholic and for your sacrificial support in making the best choice for your daughters and sons.

Thank you to all the family members and friends of our graduates who are here this morning to honor them and to thank God for His blessings in their lives and for blessing you through the gift of their lives.

Finally in my own name and on behalf of our local church, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to President David Hardin for his dedicated service and exceptional leadership over these past years here at Catholic. Thank you, David.

In the Gospel passage just proclaimed, Jesus is saying farewell to his followers. Gathered with him for a final meal are his closest disciples. He calls them now, not students, not slaves, not graduates, but simply friends.

“I no longer call you slaves, I call you friends because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father.” This statement sounds pretty simple and straightforward but it is a really curious. I have searched through the Gospels and I can’t find anyplace where Jesus calls his disciples “slaves.” Jesus is presuming here that they and we have a thorough familiarity with the Old Testament. They did; we probably do not.

In the Hebrew Scriptures the English title “slave or servant” translates the same Hebrew or Greek word. In the Old Testament it was a title of honor given only to a few select individuals. Moses, Joshua and David were called “slaves or servants of God”. But the title “friend of

God” is used of only one person in the Old Testament. Abraham is the only one called “the friend of God”. If we understand this, we can recognize a whole new and wonderful truth that Jesus is teaching here. Jesus has conferred on all of us who are his followers, all of us who obey his commandment to love, a new bond of intimacy, a new living connection that only one person before Christ every experienced. What was uniquely true of the patriarch Abraham has passed over in the New Covenant to all the baptized. He calls us and makes us his friends.

Jesus tells us the reason why He chose us and loved us into this friendship with Him: “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy might be complete.” Joy is something that is as precious as it is elusive. Joy is precious because our hearts are wired to seek joy; we earnestly want joy in life. Joy is also elusive when we look for it in the wrong places: money, fame, power, immorality, drugs, self-serving lifestyles. If, on the other hand, we dare to follow Jesus, living in His love and loving as He loves, seeking the happiness of others rather than our own happiness, we will find this elusive, precious treasure called joy. Jesus promises it and he will deliver.

There are lot of similarities between you graduating seniors and the friends of Jesus as they sat with Him at the Last Supper. They had been through moments both tragic and happy as he led and taught them. They had walked long dusty roads and visited countless places together. They have shared miraculous moments and have seen the power of God at work in ways that seemed impossible. And now, in

this farewell address, Jesus summarizes all the lessons for them and for you, seniors. These chosen ones are chosen to continue the mission. They are to act in love and to bear good fruits. They are even told to be prepared to lay down their lives for others. But, they will not be alone. They will never be alone. Jesus will continue to abide with them and his power and love will sustain them.

Our Lord also reminds the apostles that the fact that they are sitting with him at the Last Supper, the fact that they had traveled with him during his public ministry was due to his initiative in their lives and his initiative alone. They had not decided on their own to follow him. He chose them. It was Christ's initiative. They had only to respond. And He explains why He chose them: "I have chosen you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain." Go and bear fruit. From the table of the First Eucharist to this celebration of the Lord's Supper, it is made fully clear that Christianity is mission oriented. Christians are directed to some great task, to accomplish something, to achieve something for the Kingdom of God. What better send-off for you graduates of Lexington Catholic today than these words of our Lord: the seeds have been planted in you. The seeds have been nurtured. Go and bear fruit that will remain.

Today in your Baccalaureate Mass Jesus reminds you of this final and most important lesson. You are his friends. You are to keep his commands to love as he has loved us. God has made you talented, unique and wonderful. Playing life small will not serve God, the world or yourself. There is nothing enlightened about putting your light

under some cover so that other people won't feel insecure or threatened by our faith, our values, our principles, our morals. You were born to manifest the glory of God. Not just some of you but all of you. Your parents and your teachers at Lexington Catholic helped you to understand the glory of God and the part you are to play in revealing that glory. You will find in life that as you let your light shine – as you let the light of Christ Jesus shine - you will give other people permission to do the same. As we are set free from our fears, our anxieties, our doubts, our life helps to set others free so that they too can better radiate the glory of God.

That's the hope, that's the command that Jesus left for his followers as He went off to Calvary, to the tomb and to Easter. That's the hope, that's the command that is set before you today as you graduates go off. May your lives always abound with loving service, a constant awareness of your dignity, an abiding faith and joy. May your lives bear fruit that will enrich others' lives, that will preach the Gospel, that will serve the Lord. May your lives bear the kind of fruit that will last.