

FROM THE ARCHBISHOP

Dear class of 2011,

You have been on my mind a lot these past few weeks. I have spoken to many of you, and you have told me about your plans for summer, college, graduate school and career. I can see the excitement in your eyes — and at times a bit of anxiety — as you face the future.



ARCHBISHOP
J. PETER
SARTAIN

No doubt many people are offering advice. Do you mind if I add a few thoughts of my own? I'll keep them brief, and I hope they're easy to remember.

Always give first place in your life to God. After all, he made you and knows what is best for you. Ever since you were born, your parents and teachers have been God's instruments for building a strong spiritual foundation for you. Even though the building blocks of this foundation were tailor-made for you at each stage in your development and may seem simple, don't ever consider them "childish." They will serve you well the rest of your life. Trust me on that one.

Nurture in your hearts a conscious and deliberate commitment to basic human respect. After God, people must come first. Spend time with your family. Pay close attention to the little things in the lives of others. Console the friend who hurts. Slow down to listen to the one who needs to talk. Notice newcomers in your midst and make them feel welcome.

Always take the high road. Be big enough to forgive; let go of grudges. Be the first to extend a hand in friendship, the last to judge. Learn compas-



sion; be agents of reconciliation. Read the newspaper and first notice the faces and names of people, not the statistics.

Give thanks

When you fail, ask forgiveness. I wonder how many of us carry on our shoulders burdens which would be quickly lifted if only we would lift up our heads and confess our faults. There is not one among us who has never had the need to admit wrongdoing and make a fresh start. Practice saying, "I'm sorry."

Pray to God with your whole heart, casting your lives into his hands with brave surrender. Make it your goal not just to know God, but to know him more. Not just to love God, but to love him more. Not just to believe, but to believe with even greater conviction. Not just to be kind to others, but to love them selflessly as Jesus Christ.

Be patient. Many people, by acting impulsively, have brought needless suffering to themselves and others. A good night's sleep, a heart-to-heart conversation with a friend, several

deep breaths, and a fervent prayer will help today's troubles or temptations lose their power to frighten or seduce.

Give thanks. Thank God, who gave you life and sustains your every breath. Even if you think of yourself as weak in faith, that does not change the fact that God has done everything for you. Thank your parents, your professors, your principals, your teachers, your coaches, the men and women who kept your school clean and those who staffed the office. They have done more favors for you than you can possibly imagine.

Stand for life

Remember: Obligations are good for us. "Obligation" is not a dirty word. In fact, religious obligations (such as going to Mass every Sunday and confessing our grave sins at least once a year) ensure that we avail ourselves of the great blessings of the church — the Eucharist and God's loving mercy. Why would one not want to fulfill such obligations, when they keep us on the right path and give us the greatest nourishment we could possibly receive? We owe God the fulfillment of religious obligations, in grateful response to what he has done for us. They are truly the least we could do.

There are also obligations flowing from commitments to others: the obligations to put in a good day's work for one's employer; to be faithful to one's spouse; to be true to one's promises; to take care of one's health. Our fulfillment of these and many other obligations makes the world go 'round.

Use your freedom well. Some people think of graduation as being released from prison. They say to themselves, "Now that I am free, I can do as I please and enjoy myself." They will soon reach a decidedly un-enjoyable dead end. Freedom is found in doing what is right, true and good. That is what we were made for! When we "give in" to things that are evil and not good for us, we are not free at all. What is right, good and true has one source, and that is God. It is only in searching for his truth and obeying it that we find freedom.

Always stand for life. Life is sacred, from the moment of conception until natural death. As a Catholic, one of your obligations is to respect, promote and defend life at every stage.

I could write more, but I will stop here. Putting God first, forgiving and asking forgiveness, being faithful to your obligations, using freedom well, and standing for life have far-reaching consequences. As with most things in life, they are closely interrelated, and one has an effect on the other. I will pray for you, that you may have life, as Jesus said, "to the full."

Congratulations!

DO YOU HAVE AN INTENTION FOR ARCHBISHOP SARTAIN'S PRAYER LIST?

You may send it to him at Archbishop Sartain's Prayer List, Archdiocese of Seattle, 710 Ninth Ave., Seattle, WA 98104.