

A message and blessing for grads

Dear class of 2012,

As you mark your graduation this month, I would like to take a moment to congratulate you on behalf of the people of the Archdiocese of Seattle.

Like all transitions in life, graduation marks both an end and a beginning; we end one phase of life to begin another. Sometimes it's not until we begin the new phase that we reap the benefits or recognize the blessings of the one we've just finished. Pretty soon we discover that life has many transitions, many "graduations."

This spring I have been thinking about the graduates of the archdiocese and asking myself what I would say if I had the chance to speak to you in person. I will see only a small percentage of you face-to-face, so I decided to write this column and offer a blessing.



ARCHBISHOP
J. PETER
SARTAIN

My message?

Simply that God loves you, that he will be with you and within you through every transition life brings your way; and that the Church will always be here to welcome you with open arms. We need you, because your gifts and talents have been given to you for the good of the Church and humankind. You also need the Church, the body of Christ.

Give yourself

I hope you will always see the Church as the place to share your joys and seek comfort and guidance in time of trial. I believe with all my heart that God wants us to know him, to be his intimate friend and to share his life.

The very fact that he has sent his Son, Jesus, as the Way, Truth and Life — as Savior of the world — is a sign of his infinite love and his desire to be one with us. Strive with all your heart to know Jesus, to follow him, and to stay on his way in the Church. I know from personal experience that he is worthy of our trust.

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 the newcomers in your midst and make them feel welcome.

Always take the high road. Be big enough to forgive, to 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.

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 better. 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 nice to others, but to love them selflessly as Jesus, to give yourself sacrificially in and with Jesus.

Practice saying 'I'm sorry'

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 lose their power to frighten.

Always see yourself as a beloved creature of God, a "work in progress" about whom God cares deeply. Abba John, an early Christian monk, liked to say, "A house is not built by beginning at the top and working down. You must begin with the foundations in order to reach the top."

You are a work of God. Only he makes your foundation strong.

When you are at fault, ask forgiveness. I wonder how many of us carry on our shoulders burdens which would be lifted quickly if only we would lift up our heads and confess our sins. 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" to those you offend and especially to God, whose mercy heals, strengthens and transforms us.

Strive with all your heart to know Jesus, to follow him, and to stay on his way in the Church.

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.

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 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. They have made your life much easier than it would otherwise have been.

A blessing

That's my message, one I must first preach to myself. I would also like to offer this blessing:

May our Heavenly Father, through his Son Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit,

guide and protect you always and grant you comfort each day of your life.

When you are afraid, may he give you courage.

When you are anxious and unsettled, may he give you patience.

When you are discouraged, may he give you hope.

When you are joyful, may he fill you with gratitude.

When you are searching, may he give you wisdom.

When you have sinned, may he give you pardon.

When you are alone, may he strengthen you with the support of the Church.

When you pray, may you know that you are heard, and when God speaks, may you be silent. Amen.

Congratulations, class of 2012!



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