



**Most Rev. Robert D. Gruss
Bishop of Rapid City**

**St. Thomas More High School
Graduation Mass Homily
Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help**

May 25, 2014

Good afternoon everyone. I welcome all of you today to this Baccalaureate Mass; the priests, the parents, family and friends of these graduates, and most especially you, the St. Thomas More Graduating Class of 2014. It is great that we are all here for this celebration. Again, welcome to all of you.

Graduation is an end of some academic endeavor which leads to a transition to something else – further studies, a job, etc. This is precisely what is happening with all of you who are graduating. Many of you will go off to college; others will seek employment; some of you may have chosen to serve our country. But no matter what the next step on your journey might be, learning will continue to be a part of it. And hopefully, it will include the school of faith.

Not unlike the early apostles... who were just about finished with their training from their Master... from their “*Rabboni*”, their teacher. Jesus had spent the last three years trying to give them an education about what the Kingdom of God was like... and what He and what this Kingdom would expect or require of them. What do you suppose Jesus would have given them for a grade? What do you think He would give you for a grade? I would venture to say that because of His great love for his students, He probably gave them an “Incomplete.”

In other words, they would continue His class... or take Jesus’ class all over again... but this time, as an independent study. And like the first time through the course, Jesus would be with them again, teaching them, but in a different way. He said, “**And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, the Holy Spirit, to be with you always, the Spirit of Truth, whom the world does not accept...**”

As these apostles would study and put into practice what they had learned, the Holy Spirit would continue to teach them new things... and remind them of what had already been taught. And what was important was that they would rely upon the Holy Spirit in all their decisions. As the disciples began to move the Church forward that Jesus established, they knew that they would face persecution. The apostles knew that there would be ramifications for continuing the “coursework” which Christ taught them and that the Holy Spirit was teaching them.

But they took seriously the words of Peter from the second reading,

Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence, keeping your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who defame your good conduct in Christ may themselves be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that be the will of God, than for doing evil.

(1 Peter 3:15-18)

They didn't always get it right, but they persevered, often not counting the cost. They stayed in the classroom so that they could become who they were called to be.

In these next years, God will provide you with the opportunity to grow into the person whom He has created you to be – growing toward your full potential. But in doing so, you must never lose sight of where you have come from, what you have learned at STM, and who those people are who have gotten you to this point in your life.

These next years will also provide you with the opportunity to reach farther than you ever have before and will truly set the course of your lives as you leave the nest of your parents and are sent into the world on your own. In everything, it will be up to you to decide how you are going to live. You already know the right answer. You learned it in your high school. That's why a Catholic education is so important. It teaches you to live as children of God and as persons of faith. You only have to stay true to who you are; true to whom God created you to be. Do not settle for less. Always seek to rise above the level of mediocrity.

Robert Frost once said, "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I, I took the one less travelled by. And that made all the difference."

You know, in any battle or contest, even in sports, there are two rules of conflict. First, never underestimate the enemy. You will be called upon to make choices, difficult ones. There will be peer pressure to take the easy path, to follow the crowd, to appear cool. One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is the gift of courage. Courage to swim against the tide, to take a stand, to follow the road less travelled.

The second rule of conflict, never underestimate yourself. You are a good person. Always think of yourself in a positive way. Yes, we all have a dark side to our nature, but also a bright side where honor and decency shine forth in us.

Nelson Mandela, the charismatic former president of South Africa, is often quoted as saying:

We ask ourselves who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually who am I not to be? You are a child of God.... We were born to make manifest the glory of God within us. It is not just in some of us; it is in everyone.

If we think good of ourselves we will try to live up to it, if we think badly of ourselves we will live down to it. So think good of yourselves and live up to it!

The Spirit was sent into the world so that our lives might be renewed in Christ. This Holy Spirit was sent into the world so that our world might be transformed and renewed through those who have received and responded to the Holy Spirit. This will only happen if we accept our "incomplete" and return to the classroom of prayer, and open our hearts to the gifts of the Spirit we received in Baptism and Confirmation.

With a little more seeking the Spirit through the school of prayer... with a deeper desire to grow in the life of Christ through His Spirit, with the fortitude and humility to be students of the Gospel, you can accomplish far more than you can possibly imagine.

In this Eucharist, I want to ask special blessings for each of you graduates, as you step out to continue your journey of faith in the world. Make your lives something beautiful that you offer to God!

And may Mary our Blessed Mother, the Seat of Wisdom, be your guide as you seek to use wisely the education you have received to be leaders in our society and faithful disciples of her Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Without the Holy Spirit, we can do nothing. But with this Spirit, ALL things are possible. Don't settle for an incomplete, but always seek the counsel of the One who has all the answers. This will guarantee success!

May God bless all of you today and always!