

Graduation Homily 2005

May 22, 2005

St. Augustine Prep

Richland, NJ

Your experience these past four years has been framed by the actions and lives of two men who have changed the course of history. Each has acted to defend his beliefs. Each made decisions that impacted the lives of millions. Each was driven by what we could call an obsession. And yet, even though these two men seem to have acted in similar ways, their actions are diametrically opposed because the one from your freshman year acted out of hate, fear and the culture of death; while the one from your senior year acted out of love, compassion and the culture of life. The first is Osama bin Laden; the second is Pope John Paul II.

It is difficult to conceive that we are able to speak about these two men in the same breath. This only goes to show what has been said through the ages: there is a very fine line between a saint and a sinner. What most blatantly distinguishes the one from the other is not why they acted **B** in fact, these are identical **B** rather, the difference is in the goal **B** what they hoped their actions would achieve. The one seeks fear, while the other love. The first desires death, while the last life. The freshman wants power, while the senior seeks service.

Gentlemen, you have in these two men and in these four years the wisdom and lessons of the ages. Where there is fear, death and power there

will only be pain and suffering. Where there is love, life and service, there is the crowning glory of humankind.

This year you have learned that lesson all too well and all too personally. With the passing of your classmate and our brother, Robert Wickham, you can see how good it is to love and to serve. We honor and remember Robert because he knew this instinctively and we cherish him for it.

Thomas Friedman, an observer and commentator of international events, writes that the difference between the age in which we live (which he calls the time of Globalization) and the previous age (that of the Cold War Era) is that our present age is marked by super-empowered individuals.

This super-empowerment became possible with the rise of the internet. People now have at their fingertips all the information and resources they need to do good or evil. The power of one is something that is the hallmark of the times in which we live.

For you, the Class of 2005, your personal experience, witnessed and lived, is in line with what Friedman tells us. You know that as a brotherhood, as a group of men with one mind and one heart intent upon God and good, that when you act as one you can do more than when you act dividedly. Look at your accomplishments. The championships and other honors achieved by your class over the years, as Michael Petrongolo stated so articulately, were due solely to the fact that you came together as one team with one goal. You know the power of one, the power of Unitas or Unity.

For those of us who know you, your teachers and parents, we can attest to your love for one another. The sense of Brotherhood in the Class

of 2005 is something that is both palpable and precious. Your love for one another as well as your outreach to the community at-large is more than admirable. You have come to a knowledge that is at once both theoretical and real of the value of Caritas or Love.

In realizing, living and cherishing the Unity and Love you have nourished over the last four years, you have come to the profound realization that something this good is great. It is when we love that we are united and conversely, when we are united, we are in love. It is for this reason that the Apostle John tells us, **A**God is Love and he who abides in Love abides in God and God in him.[@] This is the essence of Veritas or Truth.

It is not for trivial reasons that over the last four years you have seen and heard over and over again, the mantra of our Augustinian education **B** Truth, Unity and Love. It is these that mark the difference between the man of death and the man of life, the man of fear and the man of love, the man of power and the man of service. It is when you live these **B** Unitas, Veritas and Caritas - that you will realize your greatest potential.

Today we celebrate two special moments in the life of the Church. First, we gather to honor the mystery that is the Trinity. This is our acknowledgment that we as humans will never be able to fathom the depth and breadth of God. We cannot begin to comprehend the totality of God. However, we do have an inclination of who God is and this we have gleaned from all that God has done for us. Coincidentally, we know God as Truth, Unity and Love. If what you do does not acknowledge God, it is not true. If what you do seeks to divide rather than unite, it is not from God. If you are

called to anything other than love, it is not from God because God is love. In the Trinity we realize the validity of an Augustinian education.

Today is also a special event for the Augustinian family. We celebrate the feast of St. Rita of Cascia, the patron saint of the Impossible. The reason Rita is invoked at impossible times is because her Love for God and family was so profound, her Unity with the will of the Father so unfathomable and her understanding of God's word as Truth so prescient that for her, nothing was impossible. Learn from St. Rita. In Truth, Unity and Love all things are possible. St. Rita knew that, you know that.

We live in difficult times, some might even say impossible times. The shadow cast by men bent upon evil darkens our days. The world desperately needs what you have. The only way for the malicious minions of Osama bin Laden and his kind to be defeated is when men like Pope John Paul and his faithful followers live and value Truth, Unity and Love. This is not some vague platitude or senseless hope. No, this is the lesson of history. Good always vanquishes evil.

Personally, as someone who has been both your teacher and your friend, I am sad to see you go. I will miss you greatly. But I know your time has come. You have what the world needs. The stage is set and the audience awaits you. You have a gift to give and you must not turn back now.

In your life, I wish that you have individual friendships that are greater than the ones you have here; may you grow in love. I doubt, however, that you will ever have the bond of brotherhood with one hundred men as you do this day. It truly is an exceptional grace and one in which, I thank God, that I have been able to share.

Gentlemen, my brothers of the Class of 2005, leave this place in peace knowing that the world eagerly awaits you.