

**Saint John's Catholic Newman Center Baccalaureate Mass**

**Saint John's Catholic Newman Center**

**University of Illinois**

**May 13, 2017**

**†Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki**

**Bishop of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois**

Reverend Fathers, consecrated religious, faculty, staff, students, graduates and your family and friends, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ: it is good that we are here to celebrate this Baccalaureate Mass in conjunction with the graduation of the class of 2017. It is most fitting that today we come to this altar to offer our greatest form of thanksgiving to our Lord in the celebration of the Eucharist in gratitude for the many blessings that He has bestowed upon you over the course of your time here at Saint John's and the University of Illinois.

If you were to wander through a greeting card store around this time of year, you would be certain to find a great number of graduation cards with "inspirational" messages in them. Should you pick them up and read them, I would venture to guess that many of them center around the concept of fulfilling your dreams. While I am not here today to suggest that you shouldn't strive to achieve your goals and to build a life that you can

be proud of, I am suggesting that as you pursue your dreams, you should always keep our Lord as your focus.

As we near the end of the Easter season, our gospel readings have begun to take the form of Jesus' farewell discourses to His disciples. If we were to look at these readings through the lens of the celebration that we mark today of graduation, perhaps we could potentially see these discourses as our Lord giving the ultimate baccalaureate homily in which Jesus is preparing His disciples for the next portion of their lives.

Just a few moments ago, in our Gospel today, Saint John recounts one of these farewell discourses in which our Lord tells the disciples:

I am the way and the truth and the life.  
No one comes to the Father except through me.  
If you know me, then you will also know my Father.

Imagine for a moment what it must have been like to be there with Jesus as he spoke these words. This passage from the gospel may be one of the most well-known pieces of scripture today, but I wonder whether for many people it has just become a saying or whether we truly understand what it means in our lives. For you see, Jesus is the way, the truth and the life; and when we seek to follow the path that our Lord leads us down, then and

only then are we able to develop a relationship with the Father through Jesus.

While I said that I wouldn't refute the idea of life after graduation being about following your dreams and achieving your goals, perhaps I can suggest an additional goal for you, the goal of following the Lord's will in your life. You may be saying "of course that is one of my goals" and if it is, I encourage you to make it your primary goal.

As many of you go forth from your years here at Saint John's at the University of Illinois and begin your careers, it will be easy to get caught up in the idea of being successful. However, you should approach what society considers success with caution. Secular society is quick to tell you that you are the center of your life, that you are entitled to fulfill your dreams with little regard for others, and to be present in the moment without concern for what is to come in the future. But I can tell you that none of these pieces of "wisdom" offered by society will lead you down the path that Jesus calls you to go down nor will they lead you toward the Father. Contrary to what society holds up as success, the Church holds up a very different model of what it means to be successful. As Catholics, our measure of success should be primarily to follow the Lord's will for our

lives and to assist others in achieving holiness in their lives. Following our Lord's will means to be faithful to Him. To be faithful to Our Lord means to put His priorities over our priorities.

Your time at Saint John has prepared you for this very important time in your lives through your studies, prayer, and service to others. Throughout these years, you have been given the tools to seek to follow our Lord who is the way the truth and the life. Now you have an obligation to teach the truth that Jesus taught, proclaim that truth and live that truth in your daily lives. This is not always easy and at times may come with direct opposition, but I encourage you that during those times that you draw upon the lessons that you have learned in your formation here, so recognizing that if you follow the way that our Lord leads you and spread His truth at all times, He will be there to support you when you need it most.

So, as you graduate from this great institution of higher education, as you give thanks to your parents, family and friends for all the ways that they have loved and supported you throughout the years; as you give thanks for your professors, clergy, administrators and staff here at Saint John's and the University of Illinois, also give thanks to God for the many

graces and blessings that He has given you during your time here. These years have prepared you well to go out and bear witness to our risen Lord through your life and so to build up the body of Christ on earth and in doing so earn your eternal reward of being worthy of one of the many dwelling places in the Father's house.

Since becoming bishop fourteen years ago, it has been my custom to sing a song in my homily for Confirmation and other special occasions. Since your graduation is a special occasion, I have a song for you as well. Last summer at World Youth Day in Krakow, Poland, about 20,000 young people from North America gathered in a basketball arena for a Holy Hour, which included a song by Matt Maher called "Your Grace Is Enough." As I sing this song, I invite all of you to join in singing the refrain. It is my hope that as you embark on this new time in your lives, that you always remember that Christ never leaves you, and that His Grace is Enough to sustain you in your lives of faith in the midst of the world.

### **Matt Maher - Your Grace Is Enough**

Great is Your faithfulness, oh God  
You wrestle with the sinner's restless heart  
You lead us by still waters and to mercy  
And nothing can keep us apart

So remember Your people  
Remember Your children  
Remember Your promise, oh God

Your grace is enough  
Your grace is enough  
Your grace is enough for me

Great is Your love and justice, God of Jacob  
You use the weak to lead the strong  
You lead us in the song of Your salvation  
And all Your people sing along

So remember Your people  
Remember Your children  
Remember Your promise, oh God

Your grace is enough  
Your grace is enough  
Your grace is enough for me

May God give us this grace. Amen.