

St. Rose Academy 8th Grade Graduation – May 18, 2017 – Very Rev. Bryan W. Jerabek, J.C.L.
Cathedral of St. Paul, Birmingham, Alabama – 6:00pm Mass – 725 words

It's my pleasure to welcome all of our graduating eighth graders here, together with their families, their friends, their teachers, and the Dominican Sisters this evening. For all of you this is a happy occasion and a special milestone. Assuming that you all will attend at least four years of college, tonight is about the half-way mark of your formal education! It's nice to be half-way done! Some of you have been at St. Rose for most of your schooling thus far and your teachers have watched you grow to this point. Others came later but you have also been a blessing to your teachers and your school. Either way, the time has now come to move to the next chapter of your education and to a new school.

During your time at St. Rose you have often sung a beautiful hymn, which we will sing at the end of Mass this evening also: "Veritas et caritas, of love and truth we sing; minds for truth and hearts for love to you, Saint Rose, we bring. To others with our works of love, to God with worship true. We pledge the joy and fervor of our youth, St. Rose, to you." Yes, your time at St. Rose has been a time for growing not only in knowledge of the truth – the goal of any school – but also in the love of God and neighbor. The education you have received in the "veritas" has been first-rate. But more important is the education you have received in the "caritas" – in love – something that you cannot get at every school. Each of you therefore has been given something special, and your task is now to carry with you as you go forward.

Our Lord Jesus Christ tells us in the gospel of John that he is the truth – "I am the way, the truth, and the life", he says. And in dying on the cross for us, he gave us the ultimate example of love. A major part of your education at St. Rose has been to learn how to follow Christ more closely and love like he does. That is a learning process that never ends! I spoke about half-way points at the beginning, but when it comes to following Jesus and loving like he does, we are all just beginners. Never forget that. And if you are going to a non-Catholic school next year, you take Jesus there with you and follow him, regardless of what everyone else is doing. In another place in the gospel, Christ tells us to "come to [him]" and "learn from him", and he promises to give us rest.

Each one of you belongs to Jesus and each one of you is called to follow him all the days of your life. Let's all say it right now, "I belong to Jesus". That's a good thing to say as we begin each day and throughout each day – and it will help us to live the right way. Yes, we all belong to him. He has chosen each one of us to be here now and he has a particular plan for us all, much of which is still hidden from our sight and will only be revealed gradually as we continue to follow the Lord and strive to do his will. We can only do that if we are living in the truth with love. Veritas et caritas... that is a good motto for life! I hope you will never forget it!

Tonight, then, we give thanks to Almighty God. We give thanks to good St. Rose, who has prayed for you all and watched over you in a special way. We give thanks to your other patron saints, and especially to our dear Blessed Mother Mary. We give thanks for your parents and your teachers. We give thanks for the Dominican Sisters. We give thanks for our school benefactors. There is much for which to be thankful, and all of our thanksgiving is ultimately directed to God, to whom we look each day of our lives to light the way for us and guide us to everlasting life with him. I congratulate all of you graduating eighth graders, and I offer this Mass for all of these intentions of thanksgiving as well as for your personal intentions this evening. Amen.