

St. Rose Academy 8th Grade Graduation – May 17, 2018 – Very Rev. Bryan W. Jerabek, J.C.L.  
Cathedral of Saint Paul, Birmingham, Alabama – 6:00pm Holy Mass and Ceremony – 715 words

The only grade-school graduation I can remember in my own life was that of high school; I'm not sure we even had an eighth grade graduation. But I do remember being rather terrified of going to first grade. Kindergarten was wonderful and to my five year old brain, first grade just seemed like such a big deal. At some point during that summer before it began, I distinctly remember crying rather hysterically to my mother, pleading that she not make me go. But within a very short time after going, I loved it, and forgot my previous fears.

Kind of a cheesy story, I know, but at the same time, I'm sure that some of you may be a bit nervous about going to high school next year. Perhaps you won't be crying to mom about it, but you do have some fears. Some of you have only known St. Rose so far. Some of you have had the same friends for over eight years now. But you're about to go your separate ways: some to public school, some to John Carroll, perhaps some to another private school or homeschool.

New people, new buildings, new routines, and harder studies await. It would be great to just stay at St. Rose! But we have to move onward and upward. And you will be just fine. You'll make new friends – and you'll be glad you did. You'll still keep in touch with old friends – most of them, anyway, though some may move on; that's part of life. High school is a wonderful time, and St. Rose Academy has prepared you well for it.

We're glad to have a St. Rose graduate serving this Mass tonight: Daniel Sessions, one of our seminarians. Daniel told me that he used to fulfill his service hours by helping some of you out of your cars in the morning when you were in kindergarten. Daniel went to John Carroll, then to seminary. He used his St. Rose education well, and did great in high school, and now is responding to God's call to be a priest by going to seminary. He has a few more years of school to go, so we'll continue to pray for him. Some of you young men will be priests also – I'm certain of it – so we'll pray for you as well.

Whatever God calls us to do in this life, it is for our eternal happiness. That's the plan: he wants us to be happy with him for ever in heaven. Jesus prayed in tonight's gospel that we would all be one, just as he and the Father are one: in other words, that we would all be united in God. God is our true happiness. When we are in union with him we have joy – happiness that the world cannot give us. Even when life is difficult, we can be happy with God if we are right with him – if we are united with him.

The best and most important thing you can do in high school is to stay right with God and seek to serve him daily. To do that you'll have to choose wisely who you make friends with and what activities you do. You will have many more choices and increasingly more freedom. There will certainly be new and different temptations. But remember who you are: you belong to Jesus Christ, who wants you to remain one with him. I had the students last year repeat this after me, and I think we need to do it again this year; everyone say after me, "I belong to Jesus"!

Tonight we give thanks to the good Dominican sisters and to all your teachers down through the years. We think especially of poor Mrs. Plaisance and continue to pray for her; she is proud of you and is grateful for your prayers. We pray for the repose of the soul of Mr. Daniel Ray. We think of all the many good things, and those sad moments as well, and say to the Lord: thank you. And then we look ahead: make being in a right relationship with God your first priority, and you will do well – not only in high school, but throughout your lives, in whatever the Lord calls you to do.