

GRADUATION ADDRESS FOR THE CLASS OF 2011
by
SISTER MERCEDES COOK

ENTERING THE ADULT WORLD

Good evening, Bishop Michael Cote, Doctor John Shine, Monsignor Anthony Rosaforte, Father Joseph Tito, Mother Anthony Lemire, Members of the General Council, Members of the Advisory Board, Sr. Loreto, Members of the Academy Staff, Parents, Relatives, and Friends of the Graduates, and the Members of the Academy of the Holy Family Graduating Class of 2011

My dear Graduates, It is with a humble and proud heart that I address you tonight at this your last celebration as students of the Academy of the Holy Family. My heart is humble, because I stand here before you in awe of the combination of beauty and talent that you possess. For surely, all ten of you are uniquely outstanding in your own way. This fact is obvious to all of us present here tonight as we gaze upon you. My heart is proud, because I have been a part of what you represent tonight. You are, indeed young women who are ready to enter the world of adults in the secular and materialistic society that is ours.

All of us here tonight are happy to let you fly. Yes, and fly you will, because you are ready. Your teachers here at the Academy of the Holy Family have prepared you well for this night and for the challenges that you will face as you move out into the unknown. My dear Graduates, you are ready. Never doubt your ability to succeed. Know this, that whatever you set your mind to do you can do, because you are in America, and the American Dream is still in effect as it was in the past. Hard work, consistency, honesty, perseverance united with a genuine love of God will make your dreams come true.

My dear Graduates, when you were born, you were created with a free will. You were given the ability to choose between good and evil. You were given a free choice, and the choice that you chose to come to us was up to you. You chose to come to the Academy of the Holy Family where you were nurtured and taught the importance of making good decisions. This was a good thing. The Academy of the Holy Family has treated you well. Yet, you must know that the choices that you make in the present will determine what you do and become in the future. This, my dear Graduates, is so important that I cannot stress it enough. Good choices lead to joy, serenity, peace, and a wholesome self-image while the bad choices lead to fear, guilt, despair, and an unhealthy self-image. Our prayer for you tonight

is that you will make wise choices. We urge you to think before you act, and to pray before you jump into a new decision.

In Robert Frost's poem, *The Less Traveled Road*, he clearly shows the importance, the difficulties, and the rewards that you will get if you follow the narrow road the less traveled road. Frost simply states that the road turns into two roads. One is wide, and many people follow the wide road, because it is easy, and everyone is following it. It is exciting and thrilling to be on the wide road. The other road is narrow, steep, and filled with obstacles. It is difficult to travel on it, and the way is uphill. It is not an easy road nor is it inviting or exciting. In fact, it is difficult. Not many people travel the narrow road. However, at the end of the narrow road, although, it is less traveled the light is bright and rewarding. I challenge you, my Graduates, to be brave and to follow the less traveled road. You will never be sorry. Your reward will be etched in heaven0.

Also, along with making good choices is the idea of accountability. In our modern society, many people are not accountable for their actions or their reactions to the situations of life. You make a choice to be responsible for your actions, because it is only you made them. You are free to choose. Your family, your background, your health, your environment, and your intelligence may influence you to make a bad choice, but my dear,

Graduates, the ultimate result is that you will make the final choice, because you have been given a free will.

My dear Graduates, in just a few minutes you will leave us, and the warm and encouraging environment that was yours here at the Academy of the Holy Family for four years. I want to leave you with a few statements of wisdom which have been tested over time. I ask you to listen intently, because they will be your emotional support in the days, weeks, months, and years ahead, and they will be the foundation stones in your journey through life.

First of all, I urge you to cultivate a close and personal relationship with Jesus. Get in to His Presence. You do this by calling on him in the quiet of your heart. He waits for your call. He is closer to you than a heartbeat. He will never refuse you what is good for you. He will supply all that you need so my ,dear Graduates, let God, the Father, be your source of supply and Jesus Christ be the corner stone of your life.

Second, Nehemiah states in the Bible, "in quietness and calm will be your strength." So take time for quiet reflection every day. It will sustain you when you are overwhelmed, frustrated, and when you cannot see the end of the tunnel. In quietness and calm must always be one of your top

priorities. It is here that you must take time to rest and relax and enjoy nature. All of this, will have a soothing effect on your life as you move through your days and through your journey during life

Third, take time to protect your reputation. Your reputation is more important than silver or gold as is stated in the Bible. What is wealth and riches without a good name!. In our society and in our world this statement is often lost. However, it is one of the most important qualities that you can have and that is your good name. It covers a multitude of flaws.

Fourth, always remember the Academy of the Holy Family, because it has been for four years your home away from home. We have nurtured you, reprimanded you, and loved you. You will always have a home here with us. When you are down, and you have nowhere to turn the Academy will be your home. We will accept you back with open arms; it does not matter how you come back, we will always be here for you. Remember every year the Alumni have a meeting, and many of the former students attend. You be sure to return and enjoy old memories and friends.

Fifth, remember that you are young now, and soon you will be a woman in your own right. Remember you must always respect life. Know

this, life begins at conception and ends when Jesus determines it. Where life is concerned there is no free choice.!

I leave you with this little prayer. It is a favorite of mine. It is entitled "Stand Tall in Jesus."

Dear Jesus, see through the eyes of each Graduate here tonight. Hear through their ears. Talk through their mouths. Love through their hearts. Touch through their hands. Walk through their feet. Stand tall in them, Jesus, and let them be a witness to you and do great works for your name and for the Church. Amen. Thank you and God bless you.