

2008 Holy Spirit Preparatory School Salutatorian Speech
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I don't really watch T.V. but if Little House on the Prairie is on I just can't help but watch. I have always loved the books and the show and I think I know why. We've all heard the saying, "it takes a village to raise a child." I believe it. We need our immediate families to initially raise us but we need an extended family or a village to reinforce and support the values we have learned from our parents. In a world of contradictions, falsehoods, and evil I believe we innately long for and naturally search for havens of goodness, beauty, and truth, reflections of Heaven. We find these havens in the village away from the big city of distraction and corruption. I found a village, a haven, in Little House on the Prairie, and we have all discovered one in this wonderful school we have grown up in.

I don't think I need to explain how Holy Spirit Prep is like a village or a family but for those less familiar with it: you know pretty much everyone's name, a twelfth grader can easily and conceivably hang out with a seventh grader, but most of all, we are small enough and united in faith enough that parents, teachers, and students can all look out for each other individually and see to it that the whole person of the child is formed, not just the intellect—that we create beautiful hearts, not just beautiful minds.

But the often sad thing about villages, small towns, and homes is that people leave them. That seems to be what us kids practically pretending to be adults are doing today. We are moving to the city. Obviously it is a bittersweet time but I believe there are two different mentalities we can have towards the whole thing. We can have the mentality of a prisoner set free, (the typical, ridiculous modern mentality for graduates,) or we can leave with the mentality of a soldier. We have been trained in the village and we go off to war with our home in our hearts. We leave the buildings and we leave the routine but we don't leave the most important things. For when a soldier goes off to war there is a piece of him that will never leave home and that piece keeps him fighting. The piece of us that keeps us fighting is the one thing that unites us: our faith. We are not just soldiers we are

crusaders. Now I know that crusaders get a bad rap and when I say crusaders I don't mean the crusaders of the Middle Ages. Webster's has two definitions of a crusade: first, "any of the military expeditions undertaken by Christian powers in the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries to win the Holy Land from the Muslims," and the second: "a remedial enterprise undertaken with zeal and enthusiasm." We are the second type of crusaders. The city we are moving to is corrupted and filthy and we are, with zeal and enthusiasm and our faith in our hearts, marching into battle.

Two years ago we received the Sacrament of Confirmation together and at that time we received the Holy Spirit. I believe we are receiving the Holy Spirit in a very special way today as well—a culmination of what we have been receiving for all our years at this school. I once said in a theology class that I thought we should have a school saint. I love saints and I'm always looking for a saint for practically everything. I don't remember who said it—I think it was Mr. Verlander—but somebody said that we had the Holy Spirit. Internally of course, I thought "well that's boring- He's God and everybody has God" but I realize now that I was stupid in thinking that. Because of the Holy Spirit our school is and we are what we are today. Without Him the school and we would be nothing. Some would say that we are a preparatory school because we prepare children for college. I think we're a preparatory school because we prepare students for the battle that they are undertaking, for the city they are entering into. It is the Holy Spirit that makes us a preparatory school and it is the Holy Spirit that we carry in our hearts as we march proudly on our way, and it is the Holy Spirit that unites us even when we're miles apart. Because our village is united and formed around something eternal I believe that the village itself is in some way eternal, and in some way we are united eternally. As long as I can say Amen with every person in this room—as long as I can receive the same Jesus over and over every Sunday and perhaps even every day with my classmates—as long as we are united by the same Mass we were united in this morning, we remain at home. We may live in the city but our hearts are always with our family in the village. I encourage the parents and students who aren't going to see much of these walls after today to cling to that beautiful reality that unites us. I urge you to receive the sacraments and to follow the guidance of our perfect patron. It is wonderful that we will probably

see each other at reunions and events and that we will probably all keep in touch. But it is an even more beautiful reality that at the end of our lives, at the end of the war and our individual battles God may say to each one of us, “well done my good and faithful servant, welcome home.” We are all so, so different but yet so similar in the only way that really matters. When Laura Ingals moves to the city the story doesn’t lose its charm, because Laura Ingals kept her innocence and her faith and her small-town heart. In a way she was always living in the little house on the prairie even when she lived in the city. If we cling to our faith and hold on to our Holy Spirit we will never really leave home. Whether we’re working in a fast-paced law firm in New York City, or writing books out in a little cottage in the country. No matter what, if we have our faith, our hearts are with all of you, always.

I want to thank all of our parents who are the foundation of the village we have grown up in and give us a backbone of love on which we can always lean on. I want to thank all the teachers who have taken individual interest in us and who at this unique tiny school have become good friends with us. I especially want to thank Mrs. Lee for being our senior mom and for taking care of us like we were her own—Mr. Verlander for all that he’s done for our minds and for our souls these past few years and for the wonderful trip to Rome—Mr. Petrauskis for putting up with us this year in calculus, and Ms. H-K for praying and loving, and wanting us in Heaven so badly. I want to thank Mr. Genner, Monsignor Dillon, Archbishop Donahue, all the board members, faculty, and staff for working tirelessly, often behind the scenes to make this place the place that it is. I want to thank the lunch ladies, the maintenance crews, and all the volunteers. I want to thank all the angels and saints in Heaven and most importantly I want to thank God the Father, God the Son, and our perfect patron, God the Holy Spirit who rests invisibly on each of our heads today and unites us as one family forever.