

Graduation 2007

Rev. Msgr. Peter J. Vaghi

With great joy and happiness, we gather as a parish and as a school community with Father Woods, our wonderful sisters, teachers, parents, relatives and friends, to celebrate-- in the context of this Mass of the Sacred Heart--the 51st graduation of Little Flower School in this 40th anniversary year of the dedication of this church. There could be no greater symbol for this annual rite of passage, this first major milestone for our graduates, than to focus on the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

In their farewell letter in tonight's program, Megan Tigani and Emma Hurt end their beautiful reflection by writing confidently: "We are positive that a piece of our hearts will always stay here at Little Flower because we have all become a part of this loving, generous family." How right they are! For their hearts, the hearts of all the graduates, in fact each of our hearts, share in the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. For He remains here and at the same time He is wherever we are.

For the Sacred Heart of Jesus is another name for the abiding and unconditional love of God, the love of Christ Jesus, the Good Shepherd who cares for us like a shepherd for his sheep. In the words of our first reading, speaking of His sheep, of you and me, He promises and reassures us that "If any are weak, I will help them. I will take good care of my people." And oh how He has taken care of this 51st graduating class from Little Flower--in their friendships for each other, in their team spirit and in their love for each other.

And, dear graduates, be assured that He will continue to shower His love upon you as you leave here to begin high school. You leave here, after all, sharing in and witnessing to the love of Jesus in how you speak and how you act--always having Jesus as your model and friend.

It is Jesus whose love was dramatized beyond all belief, a love we can never forget, on a hill in Jerusalem many centuries ago. It is a love made visible as He hung on a cross and His sacred heart was pierced and "immediately blood and water flowed out." In the water and blood flowing from the side of Christ, St. Augustine understood water as the waters of Baptism and the blood as a sign of the Eucharist.

Yes, rivers of living water and the blood of life and self-giving. An ancient painting of the crucifixion shows these two streams flowing from His heart--the water filling the baptismal font and the blood filling the chalice at Mass. Oh what love from the sacred heart of Christ! It is a love that invites His own heart to be pierced on the cross, a love--in the words of our second reading--that "has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us."

In the context of this Mass of the Sacred Heart, on this your Graduation Day, dear graduates, I salute and congratulate you as do your parents, teachers, relatives and friends.

And as your pastor, as you prepare to leave our school, I wish to emphasize one final point above all others that you have learned here so well at Little Flower. I speak of the importance of the Eucharist--that most important gift Jesus has given us and continues to give us, that most important gift we can possibly speak about as you leave this most wonderful school.

I earnestly and most sincerely invite you to make this encounter with Jesus the most important weekly meeting you have for the rest of your lives--each and every Sunday at Holy Mass. If you do this, and I trust you will, your lives--my dear friends--will continue to be nourished from the bread of heaven and you will bring His love, the love of His Sacred Heart, to the world in which we live. To be a Christian means to encounter the Person of Jesus over and over again, Jesus Who personifies Love Incarnate, Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament. That is my daily hope and prayer for each and every one of you-- for you mean so much to us now and in the future.

Before we return to the altar, I wish to say a word of deep gratitude to the parents of our graduates. I have come to know most of you and know of your deep love and spirit of sacrifice and generosity. Day in and day out, you demonstrate the love of Jesus for your children, and our school and parish. Thank you in my name and their name as well.

I wish also to thank Sister Rosemaron, our teachers and administrators, my brother priest Father Woods who cares for our children each and every day in the school.

We return then to the altar with joy in our hearts raising our voices to God, praising Him in His Sacred Heart, a heart full of love for each of us.

AMEN