GRADUATION SPEECH

FOR

GENE FENNELL

Hello everyone and welcome to the 2012 Commencement exercises for this year’s graduating class of Holy Trinity High School. We are thrilled to have so many family members and friends present today and I want to acknowledge all of you for the support and the faith you have demonstrated for our celebrants. To all of the faculty and administration, thank you for the fine job you do teaching, mentoring and guiding our students to learn the lessons essential in living an enriched, fulfilled and faith based life. We are also very honored to be in the presence of three people who embody the dedication and spirit of our Catholic educational community. I would like to extend a very special welcome to Bishop Murphy, our dedicated and steadfast Superintendent of Schools, Sister Joanne Callahan, and to our vital new Associate Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Steve Cheeseman. Bishop Murphy, Sister Joanne, and Dr. Cheeseman, we at Holy Trinity are very proud of our heritage and reputation as one of the “best of the best.” Thanks to the support and vision of each one of you, individually and collectively, the future of Holy Trinity and its students and graduates is bright, and we acknowledge you for that.

To all of the parents, please accept our most sincere congratulations. I don’t have to tell you that this year’s group of graduates is exceptional, and the sacrifices you made and the encouragement you so selflessly shared is an inspiration. It is a privilege to guide our students and show them how to live a life filled with knowledge, religious devotion and compassion, and knowing that we have such dedicated partners to support the process at home is truly exceptional. We know the devotion and sacrifice these times demand and we acknowledge you for your perseverance. Although we understand that each family faces its own unique trials and challenges, your rewards and gratification stand before you as accomplished and fine young adults.

To our graduating students, you have all done a fine job and here we are! Four years ago, it looked like an uphill climb, and it was, but today is the day all of you worked so hard to reach. The tests have been scored, the grades have been determined, and your religious and educational obligations have been met with regard to Holy Trinity’s curriculum. But guess what? Today is not the end; it is the beginning of the rest of your lives! Today is the day you transition from being high school students to young adults, and before you know it, the future will lie in **your hands**. Always remember that you are **Titans**. The dictionary definition of a “Titan” is “a person of great intelligence, strength and importance.” A true Titan does not let that definition go to his or her head. A genuine Titan goes out into the world and serves the people he or she meets, and brings that strength and intelligence to those who need it. A true titan knows the meaning of devotion and service to family, friends and neighbors, and we are all confident that each one of you will make an indelible and positive imprint on our world and the future of our community, or any community in which you choose to serve. You have received a fine education; rich in lessons learned that are essential to living a rewarding and worthwhile life. You have learned the meaning of true sportsmanship, teamwork and believing in the power and comfort that only true faith and devotion can provide. Each one of you has had opportunities to learn and grow and to truly understand the meaning of fulfilling Christ’s mission. You’ve seen the high school world “through the eyes of a Titan,” and now it’s time to take that vision and apply it to the future. Each one of you has received a well-rounded education filled with academics, sports, various other activities and volunteer work and you have begun to define the path that will lead you through life. It is no coincidence that the school’s motto is “A special time, place and spirit.” Remember that Holy Trinity serves as a “microcosm” of the world you will inherit. Remember the balance you achieved in your high school careers. Remember how grounded you felt. Remember that even if something was challenging, you knew you could always seek guidance in your peers or your teachers and mentors. You are not alone in the “real world” either. Don’t be afraid to ask questions. Don’t be afraid to fail. From failure comes life’s most precious lessons. Remember to persevere. Someone once described success as getting up one more time than you fall. Remember you do not know everything and every moment we’re here on earth is an opportunity to learn.

As each of you takes your turn to walk through the doors of Holy Trinity one last time, take a deep breath; be conscious of your surroundings. Take a good long look at the hallways, the classrooms, the lobby and remember that each one of you has been a part of a supportive and mutually giving relationship. You have learned from us, and we have learned from you. Someone once said, “Faith is like electricity. You can’t see it, but you can see the light.” The light of the education you received at Holy Trinity will serve to guide you through every phase of your lives.

Whether you’re going on to college or entering the working world, the one thing high school graduates will find out is there is no end to the advice you will get, and most of it is very good. You just have to know how to maintain an open mind, really listen and discover the most effective way that advice will inspire and motivate you. All of us want to be successful in life, but each one of us has to define what true personal success is for him or her. To get the process started, let’s see what some well-known “Titans” of industry have shared as advice to high school graduates:

* Jonathan Schwartz, the CEO of Sun Microsystems has advised, “Always have a plan. It’s okay to change the plan. It’s not okay to show up without one.” In other words, no one will live your life for you. It’s time to take what you know and begin to learn the art of self-generation.
* Jeff Rachor, the CEO of Pep Boys gives us priceless information. He suggests, “Master the art of communication. The ability to communicate effectively with people from all walks of life will differentiate you from most peers and position you for success in whatever endeavor or career path you pursue.” In addition, remember that communication is a two way street. If you want to be listened to, then learn how to be a good listener. Learn how to “empathize” and as you speak, think about what the other person is hearing. Be conscious of how you express yourself. Learning to distinguish and effectively express your thoughts in every aspect of your life is essential.
* Jim Quigley, the CEO of the accounting firm Deloitte and Touche, very wisely states, “To be successful in business and life, we must follow a higher standard of ‘is it right?’ In my view, the people who follow this standard live richer, fuller lives and achieve success that lasts. In other words, Integrity is everything.

To everyone, may you have well deserved celebrations to commemorate this graduation. Applaud the accomplishments collectively made, acknowledge the support and guidance given, and prepare for the life and lessons yet to be learned. We look forward to hearing how the future looks through the eyes of our newly graduated Titans, and May God Bless all of you. Thank you all!

Thank you all!