**GRADUATION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**KRISTY** **PHAM**

Hello everyone!!! To family and friends, faculty and administration, distinguished guests, current students, and of course, my fellow graduates.... **WE** made it!!! Here we are at our commencement exercises for the Saint Frederick’s Catholic High School class of 2018, and I know that I speak for all of us when I say that I am sure we got to this point through hard work, dedication, lots of support and mentoring, and of course...... we kept the **FAITH**. In order for anyone to accomplish anything, a person has to believe in themselves and have confidence that with a positive attitude and willingness to work hard in order to succeed, that investment will pay off. Saint Augustine said, “Faith is to believe what you do not see; the reward of this faith is to see what you believe.”

Faith has many meanings and each one applies to the time we spent attending St. Fredericks. We learned to have faith in ourselves. We demonstrated we are worthy of the faith our parents and friends placed in us and it is justified. We drew strength from our beliefs in a greater power, and the teachings that motivated us. We were presented with problems and projects and we had to look within to determine how much support and effort we needed to invest.... for instance.... many of you may know my older sister, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. In many ways, she is my role model. She’s two years older, is currently a student at LSU, and was also her class valedictorian.... and **THEN** she claimed she was able to complete a Rubik’s Cube on her own. Did I believe her? Was my **faith** in my sister challenged and tested???? You **BET** it was!!! I mean... she’s **REALLY** smart... after all, obviously like me, she’s Asian.... (**Wait for the laugh**).... but she believed in herself and her ability to conquer a plastic box.... even though there are..... ready for **THIS**??? **FORTY THREE QUINTILLION** different combinations and my sister figured out, in twenty clicks or less.... the key.... and **THAT** my friends, is **FAITH** at work. (**Wait for the laugh**). By the way.... who even knew that such a thing as a **QUINTILLION** exists? It’s a number with eighteen zeros placed after the first digit... we learn something new every day!!

We had many, many opportunities throughout our six years here at St Fredericks to find, test, practice, and demonstrate our faith. Who among us will ever forget when coach Hatten made the seventh grade girls do **FIVE HUNDRED YARDS** of bear crawls? And which ones of us almost lost faith in our ability to **SURVIVE** that challenge??? Come on... I **KNOW** there were a few of us that had doubts!! (**Wait for the laugh**). (**Think of two other challenges you all faced during school**). As if hundreds of yards worth of bear crawls wasn’t a big enough challenge, what about when we all had to complete that essay on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ while studying for midterms? Or how about the pressure of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ as we completed our \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_? And what about the senior prank part 2? Did you all maintain faith that we could actually pull it off??? Each and every thing that challenged our faith strengthened us and prepared us for the next chapters in our lives.

In the classic Greek novel, “The Odyssey,” faith is tested at many turns. Odysseus is gone for twenty years fighting the Trojan War. He maintains faith in his abilities and strengths in order to return home to his wife, Penelope. During that twenty year absence, Penelope does what she must to discourage all of the suitors who vie for her attention.... legend has it that there were **ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHT** men who tried to distract and tempt her... and that was **BEFORE** social media and online dating!!!! **Hundreds** of men.... and there are only **FORTY** students in our **ENTIRE CLASS**!!! (**Wait for the laugh**).... they tried to break her faith in Odysseus and that he would return home. With discipline, determination, and faith, our hero found his way home.... and with matching loyalty, ingenuity, and **MORE** faith, Penelope waited and fended off her suitors because she **KNEW IN HER HEART** that her husband would come back to her.

I don’t know how many of you graduates have read “The Odyssey,”.... or... (**Name your English teacher**) ... Mr. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, please cover your ears for a minute.... or read the Cliff Notes.... (**Wait for the laugh**), but now is the time, as graduates, that we have to really begin to pay attention, take notes, and be willing to learn the lessons we will need to carry with us in order to succeed in life.

... And while literature breaks up its narrative into chapters, we do the same with our lives. It is now time for us to turn the page to new and exciting challenges in our lives. Remember all that you have learned to this point, because we have built strong foundations... we have learned what is needed to take the next steps forward and in the process we must remember to keep our eyes and ears open, pay attention, and have faith in ourselves. Every experience builds on the earlier ones... every test and challenge teaches us to go forward with more strength, more awareness, more faith. Know you can succeed on your own and don’t always try to rely on “electronic faith.” Don’t take short cuts... remember learning the hard way is the most valuable way... Really **READ** “The Odyssey...” don’t rely on life’s Cliff Notes! Shortcuts won’t do us any favors. Have faith in your ability and **NOT** the easy way out. Steve Jobs said, “Technology is nothing. What’s important is that you have faith in people, that they’re basically good and smart, and if you give them tools, they’ll do wonderful things with them.”

I want to congratulate my fellow graduates. I have faith that we will stay in touch and continue to support each other! I want to acknowledge my family for keeping their faith in my ability to succeed in life, and I want to express my gratitude to all of the faculty, administrators, and leaders at St.Fredericks for showing us the way to the future... with faith. Thank you all!!!