**CHARITY EVENT SPEECH**

**FOR**

**MANAL AKIKI**

To friends and family, parishioners and neighbors, faculty, staff, and distinguished guests, thank you for being here and sharing this wonderful evening here at Saint Joseph’s. We are honored and privileged to have \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ joining us for tonight’s festivities, and we can’t possibly let this evening go without thanking Father \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, our parish priest whose vision for our community is one that focuses on stronger families, closer bonds, and finding strength in faith and service. All of that vision is manifested by your presence, both here, on special occasions, and in our daily and weekly worship.

Whenever we have taken a look at the world around us in the last couple of years, we have been constantly reminded that life, as we know it, can change in a heartbeat. There’s a saying we often repeat, and that now comes to mind is, “This day comes once and won’t be replayed.” In other words, ….. “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.” These words ring louder and I can’t imagine them being be more true than nowadays…. Somehow, through the challenges and curveballs that we find in our paths, it is our mandate as human beings… and **HUMANE** beings, to live life to its fullest …to enjoy every moment….. to embrace and encourage the people around you, and to allow our children to learn and to flourish in their creative, innocent ways…. and **especially** tonight, to allow these children to brighten your evening and lift your spirits with their performance…

It’s during events like these that I am taken back….. and as I visit my old self… the Manal of her youth, I begin to remember what it was like to be in first grade…. To be part of a performance or a recital, learning and discovering the voice that I would grow into. It’s nights and performances like these that stay with us for lifetimes…. literally… so while we may think, at first, that this is a cute bunch of kids trying their best to give it their all, remember… **THESE** are the good old days… for them. What happens tonight will very probably shape and influence these students for years to come… so for you, as an audience… **NO PRESSURE**!!! (**Wait for the laugh**). We’re all in this together… **YOUR** “performance…” your reactions, your encouragement, your acknowledgements, and **OF COURSE**, your **THUNDEROUS** applause…. In all the **right places** … (**Wait for the laugh**), will go a long way to inspire joy, confidence, and, undoubtedly, some much needed magic. Tonight gives us all a golden opportunity to come together, suspend the concerns of the “outside world,” leave those cares and concerns at the doorstep where we walked in, and just immerse yourselves in the fun, festivities and the message of the entertainment.

We hope you will enjoy this presentation as much as their teachers, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ enjoyed creating the program and preparing this talented, adorable group. I once heard this, “A teacher’s job is to take a bunch of **live wires** and see to it that they are **grounded**.” Well!!! I’d say we have a great bunch of live wires and our teaching staff has done an **EXCELLENT** job of harnessing their **electric** talents and personalities!!! I want to take a moment to acknowledge and thank the parents of this gifted troupe, especially the moms who never fail to amaze us and inspire us with their shared purpose and concern to raise their children in a strong faith-filled environment to be well centered, joyful, and enthusiastic as they learn to find their voices and share their self expression.

Let’s all sit back and give our undivided attention to our performers. Please enjoy this very special presentation and give a big hand to the students of Heritage & Faith as we welcome first the 1st graders, the true “future voices of America,” who will be presenting St Joseph the Worker …. Let’s give them a big hand….