**Malchow Speech [EZ Speech No. 16167]**

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Commencement address by Mr. Tom Malchow to the 2017 graduating class of St. Thomas Academy.

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ladies and gentlemen . . . faculty and staff . . . distin­guished guests . . . graduating seniors and parents . . .

welcome to the commencement ceremony for the 2017 graduating class of st. thomas academy. i feel enormously privileged to be able to address you this [morning/afternoon/evening]. i rather suspect i was invited to do so because — while st. thomas academy can boast many famous politicans, captains of industry, artists, and community leaders among its alumi — i might be the only one who participated in three different olympic games. my sport was swimming, the butterfly specifically; and i won silver in atlanta in ’96, and gold in 2000 in sydney, where I also set a new world’s record. and for the ’04 games, i was elected captain of the u.s. swim team.

i mention this accomplishment not to boast, but to illustrate that the preparation and inspiration i got from attending st. thomas academy was very largely responsible for helping me not only to achieve this success, but also to embrace that success with both humility and gratitude.

now, it’s traditonal for commencement-day speakers to couch their remarks along the lines of “advice-to-the graduates-on-how-to-live-a-good-and-productive-life.” well . . . i’m not sure that tom malchow has anything to say on this subject that the bible hasn’t already covered incredibly well. just read the book, do what it says, and you’ll be all right. end of lecture.

but seriously . . . when i thought about exactly what gems of wisdom i could impart to you seniors this evening, it occurred to me that i actually *might* have a couple of things to say that might put a different kind of slant on the subject of living life well.

firstly, i’d like to suggest that — if there’s any one, single key to living a good life — it is to foster and nurture and manifest in all things and in all ways an *attitude of gratitude.*

not one of us gets through this life on our own. throughout our days, we’re helped along the way by our parents, our teachers, our church, our friends, and by the many mentors who’ve given us guidance and counsel through the years. we can achieve little on our own. i don’t care how smart you are, or clever, or diligent, you’re always going to need the help and support of others to achieve your goals in life. and for this, you’re going to “owe” them.

and how do you repay this debt? it’s simple. just say “thank you,” or better yet, “thank you; I’m very grateful.” it’s not good enough simply to *feel* grateful. no. you’ve got to *express* that gratitude straight out loud, and most importantly, you’ve got to *mean* it. you’ve got to make sure that anyone who helps you in any way, large or small, knows that you sincerely appreciate their effort or their help. from the cashier at mcdonald’s to the math teacher who took the extra time to explain quadratic equations when you just couldn’t wrap your mind around the subject, you need to say “thank you” from the heart. as it is said in *thesslonians* 5:18: *“give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God.”* you will find that an attitude of gratitude is one of the most attractive and endearing traits you can manifest.

now, i’m pretty sure that, for most of you, your parents are the people to whom you owe the greatest debt of gratitude. think of all the things they’ve done for you. think of the sacrifices they might have had to make to send you to such a wonderful center of learning as st. thomas academy. think of all the love and care they’ve lavished upon you from the moment of your birth to this special moment in time. are you thinking . . . ? are you feeling it . . . ? good! now i’d like all the seniors in the audience and all their parents to please stand up.

[after they’ve done so] good! now seniors: i want you to hug your parents and tell them how very grateful you are for all they’ve done for you. [as they do so] that’s so beautiful! you can sit down now . . . thank you.

now, a hundred years before jesus was born, an ancient hebrew scholar and philosopher posed to his students three simple questions to ponder. his first question was this: *“if i am not for myself, who shall be for me?”*

[repeat the question]: *“if i am not for myself, who shall be for me?”*

now, what do you suppose he meant by this question

he meant that once you’ve reached adulthood, there’s no one else on this earth who’s been put here for the sole and exclusive purpose of taking care of *you*. living your life, making decisions in your life, taking care of yourself — these are all now *your* responsibilities and yours alone. your parents’ work is done. you’re on your own now. you’re now the master of your fate and the captain of your soul.

i do hope and trust that you feel, as I do, that st. thomas academy has given you all the tools you’ll need to navigate this wonderful new journey brilliantly. but though god may remain your co-pilot, you’re flying the plane solo now.

i hope this doesn’t frighten you, because it shouldn’t. rather, it should represent a wonderful, liberating freedom, the kind of independence that some of you have sought for years now, and that most of you probably got a little taste of the first time you were allowed to get behind the wheel of an automobile on your own. self-reliance is a *good* thing.

but is self-reliance enough? no . . . it is not. for we must now consider the second question posed by that ancient scholar, and that question was:  *“if i am for myself alone, what am i?”*

now what does *that* mean?

it means that if my life is *only* about me, if I am indeed “for myself alone,” then truly I am nothing. *philippians* verses 2 thru 4 sums it up wonderfully, i think, for it is here that we’re admonished to *“do nothing out of selfish ambition or empty pride, but in humility consider others more important than yourselves.”*

we were put on this earth for two purposes and two purposes only: the first is to praise god, and the second is to help others. the most important and noble purpose we have on this earth, while we’re down here, is to relieve the suffering of others, to help others realize their full potential, to give care and succor to those who are in pain, to raise others out of despair and into joy. *this* is the secret of living a meaningful life. *this* is what it means truly to be a christian.

so the two-part secret to living a successful life is to — first — develop a genuine attitude of gratitude within yourself, then manifest that gratitude openly and freely; and then — second — to live a life of service and helpfullness to others. nothing could be simpler, right?

but what about that ancient scholar’s third and final question to his students? it was a very simple question inded, and i’m sure you can all fill in the blank, for what he asked his students was this: “if not now . . . “ [motion with an open palm to prompt the audience to complete the sentence]

well, for you graduating seniors, your “now” has come. whether you’re off to college, to the military, or to some other life pursuit, *now* is the time to put into action the values and ideals which you were taught here. the founder of this great school, archbishop john ireland, said that *“the excellence of an instituion is found in the class of students it sends forth each year to fight the battles of life.”* so i implore you now to go forth into this world and make archbishop ireland proud!

thank you very much for your attention, ladies and gentlemen; and to all our graduating seniors, i wish you god’s speed and a prosperous, fulfilling life, no matter what field of endeavor you might choose to pursue.

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inspirational team work leadership

Saint Thomas Academy, founded by Archbishop John Ireland, can trace its beginnings to September 8, 1885, when 66 students gathered in a renovated building on the old Finn Farm located on the shores of Lake Mennith (present intersection of Cleveland and Summit Avenues) in the western area of Saint Paul near the Mississippi River then called the Saint Thomas Seminary

**Instructions:**Graduation address for very prestigious private high school. \r\n\r\nSchool Motto Ex Umbris In Veritatem. ( Out of Dark into Truth\"\r\nCreating Life-long Values\r\nFor more than 130 years, the Saint Thomas Academy community of students, parents, faculty, and alumni has prepared young men in an environment influenced by the message of Jesus Christ to succeed in college and life. STA’s tradition, discipline, and spirit influence the life of a young man long after graduation.\r\n\r\nOur Mission\r\n“The excellence of an institution is found in the class of students it sends forth each year to fight the battles of life” (Archbishop John Ireland, Founder of Saint Thomas Academy). It is our mission to help each student discover and develop his potential talents and abilities by providing an excellent college-preparatory education that instills qualities of everlasting value: leadership, a sense of brotherhood, a strong moral compass, self-confidence, a faith guided by the Catholic tradition, and an awareness of the importance of service to others.\r\n\r\nOur Foundational Pillars:\r\nCollege Preparatory \r\nCatholic\r\nMilitary/Leadership Training\r\nAll-Male\r\nOur Work\r\nAs a college preparatory, Catholic, military, all-male school for grades 6-12, we nurture each student in ways that strengthen:\r\n\r\nHis intellectual potential through a curriculum that fosters a respect for knowledge and an abiding spirit of inquiry, analytical thinking, creative expression, effective communication skills, and independent study;\r\n\r\nHis spiritual potential through the daily teaching and practice of Catholic traditions and values, with the Gospel message of Jesus Christ as the basis for encouraging a positive and growing faith;\r\n\r\nHis moral potential through instruction and example that incorporate the moral values which foster and reinforce ethical behavior and build respectful relationships with all people;\r\n\r\nHis physical potential through a program of athletics, activities, and instruction that fosters health, safety, fitness, and good sportsmanship;\r\n\r\nHis leadership potential through the practice of leadership and citizenship in the Military Leadership program, the Corps of Cadets structure, and a variety of curricular and co-curricular experiences.\r\n\r\n\r\nSchool Website Cadets.com\r\n\r\n  
**Group size:**  
Large (100+ people)  
\n   
**Group type:**  
Students  
\n   
**Speech event:**  
Select Group Place  
\n   
**SpeechType:**  
  
\n   
**SpeechType:**  
  
\n   
**Keyperson:**  
Class of 2017 at a very prestigious all boys, catholic, military school with a 130 year history. \r\n\r\nSoccer - State Champs\r\nBasketball- made State\r\nSwimming - made true team state champs and state runner up\r\nEcon Team Won State\r\nRifle Team Number Titles\r\n14 Students with 30 or higher on ACT \r\n   
\n   
**Information about Events or Memories:**  
That being a graduate of STA prepared me for success at the University of Michigan, in the Olympics, in the business world, and as husband and father. I was a three time Olympian is Swimming. 1996, 2000, and 2004. Gold and Silver medal winner, world record holder, and Olympic team captain. \r\n   
\n   
**Audience:**  
Sense of pride and a feeling that they can achieve and accomplish, and conquer what ever life has in store for them. \r\n   
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**Action that you would like your audience to take:**  
\r\n Since of pride in graduating from St. Thomas Academy. That they are equipped with a set of skills that serve them well on the next chapter of their lives, and that they are now part of a very selected and unique alumni association.

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