**St Mary’s Catholic School Graduation**

 **Manila, April 9, 2019**

 **Oliver Rozal**

 ***Gifted \* Blessed \* and \* Empowered***

***(Oliver: Wait until everyone has settled in and becomes quiet. These are very happy events, so it may take a few moments for them to turn their attention to you.) Then begin:***

Hello everyone, welcome, welcome, to St. Mary’s Catholic School, what a wonderful day we all have ready for us. This is a magnificent gathering, so many people here today to celebrate with us.

 My name is Oliver Rozal, and I am honored that you have invited me to share this day with all of you. Graduations are a celebration, a beginning, a recognition, exciting, and sometimes **way** to long. I understand that, because I sat through them myself when I was younger, and I thought: Is this man **ever** going to **finish**? **(laughter).** So, you can relax, because I will not take too long, but my hope is for you to take some meaning from my message today, and apply the ideas to your life and to your future.

Before I speak directly to the young people who are graduating, we want to recognize all of those who made the effort to be part of this ceremony:

First and foremost are the parents, grandparents, and other family members whose encouragement and support have guided these young men and women, these children, to where they are here today. Without family we all would have a much more difficult path to follow. **(applause to the families).**

 2.

We also want to recognize and thank our Division Superintendent, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and all of St. Mary’s administration for their leadership and management that makes St. Mary’s one of the leading educational opportunities not only in Manila, but in the entire country and region.

And none of this today would be possible without all of St, Mary’s **teachers** and **counselors** who work tirelessly with each student to ensure that every child receives the curriculum, preparation, and personal care required for them to become MARIAN**. (applause for teachers and counselors).**

Finally, to our local government members who took time from their busy schedules to come today. Our government insures we have the freedom and right to practice the type of education that St. Mary’s provides. They make sure that we have the resources and laws that allow us to teach and educate in a free society, and a secure and safe environment for the students. Thank you to them, **(applause).**

**Gifted—Blessed—and--Empowered**. Those are three strong words, and when understood, can contribute to a meaningful and fulfilling life.

**GIFTED:** Being *gifted* is not only from our *inside* but also from our *outside*. We have ***inside*** gifts such as natural abilities in math, writing, science, art, history, sports, and many more subjects and vocations. Yes, it is our responsibility to grow those gifts, but they are in there just waiting. Do not think for one minute that each one of you doesn’t have a gift, because you **DO**. You might be good at puzzles, helping people, helping animals, helping the environment, caring for those less fortunate, baseball, volleyball, swimming, boxing, there are so many human gifts that are inside just waiting for you to develop and grow. So please look inside and say:

 3.

“What do I really enjoy that can benefit me as well as other people?” Look inside and see what you are good at. And most importantly look inside and see what gifts you can **share to help others**.

And then there are external ***outside***gifts. Those are the gifts bestowed on each and every one of us from all the people in our lives. The people who care for us, the people who teach us, the people who inspire us, the good parts of the world that we admire, and the parts of our world that challenge us to be better human beings.

There is one more gift that is **both** from within and from without, and that is your **faith**. Your faith, regardless of the denomination, will provide you with the courage to become a better person and show you a path through the most difficult times. **Never** give up on your faith, it will **never** give up on you.

So, take all these gifts, unwrap, enjoy them, use them, and most importantly, share them, to enrich your life and the lives of those you touch.

**BLESSED:** We are blessed with every breath we take. We are blessed to be alive, to have family, to have friends, to have health, to have the opportunity to be educated, and we are very **blessed**,…to be MARIANS. We should never, ever, take blessings for granted, and never forget how fortunate we all are. So, share your blessings with friends, family, and strangers, by being kind, thoughtful, honest, helpful, truthful, and loving. Sharing your blessings enrich the lives of those you give to and returns to you a sense of fulfillment.

 4.

**EMPOWERED** What is empowerment? It is an intangible element from inside that comes from strength, confidence, and success. It gives you the ability to go out, make a difference, and accomplish so many things in life. Empowerment gives you the ability to someday provide for and take care of your own family. Empowerment gives you strength to walk tall, be a leader, be proud, and EMPOWERMENT MAKES YOU **MARIANS**, **(applause).** Always remember that empowerment can reach so many people, so do not abuse it, use it wisely, with kindness, and for the benefit of everyone.

I want to leave you with several thoughts.

Never, never, stop learning, whether it is high school, university, trade school, seminary, or military. Then seek wisdom from your parents, grandparents, and elders. They have gone before you, they have seen and done so much. Allow them to share, teach, and help you gain your own wisdom and balance in life.

 As you go through life there will be joy and sadness. Learn from the sadness and know that it will pass with time. And learn too from the joys of life, keep those joys with you forever as you build new ones.

Finally,…..If you smile on the inside, you will always smile on the outside. If you have kind thoughts on the inside, you will show kindness on the outside. And if you are truly content, your life will truly be fulfilled. I wish that for everyone here today.

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 5.

**OK,……Speaking of fun**,….. for those students who have been sitting there waiting for that guy to *stop talking*, (me), **(laughter),** let me add one thing. Your parents, your grandparents, your older sisters and brothers are *not stupid*. So whatever you might have planned for an hour from now, or later tonight, that youthink you can get *away with*,……..that you think we don’t know about,….well you can’t get away with it**, (laughter),……**because,….. *we already did it many years ago,* **(laughter**), and we know what you’re up to,…**(laughter),** and not only will we tell, we might even post it onFacebook. **(laughter).** So, whatever it is you have planned that you are not allowed to do,……don’t do it**, (laughter).**

 **Have fun everyone, please be careful out there, and……**

 **Thank You Very Much.**