



Commencement Comments
May 2009

Good Morning.

It is an honor to welcome you to Episcopal Collegiate School's Sixth Commencement.

Not too long ago, Mrs. Entzminger was trying to explain to a group new to the school what this day was like. It was clear that she was struggling a bit to find just the right words to describe it. No doubt this was frustrating for an English and drama teacher. In a matter of seconds, however, her expression changed and her frustration eased. "It is just beautiful," she said. Even though we have had a slight change in venue this year, I could not agree more.

Our Commencement is a sacred occasion in the life of our school, simultaneously evoking fond memories and marking symbolically the beginning of new journey for each one of our graduates. Even amidst the many life events that will come their way, I have no doubt that the Class of 2009 will always remember this day.

As I thought about this past year, this day and the Class of 2009, I realized that Father Time remains hard at work. Another school year has come and gone and we are saying tearful goodbyes to another group of outstanding young people. I recall thinking that it seemed like only yesterday when the start of the school year was upon us. Entering our tenth year, a special eagerness and hopefulness infused our hallways and our classrooms as the New Year got underway. I think most would agree that this year did not disappoint.

Today, we rejoice and give thanks for The Class of 2009. These outstanding young men and women embody the virtues of honor, service and compassion, which set apart Episcopal Collegiate School graduates. They leave a distinguished legacy of achievement built through years of steadfast perseverance. They will be most remembered, however, for sharing freely with us their dreams, their gifts and their love.

To the class of 2009, I wish to share with you two things today...a thank you and a prayer.

Thank you

Whether you are a student, teacher or headmaster, the first year at any school is a bit scary and overwhelming. There is no normal routine; nothing is familiar; and you are at the mercy of the new community that you have joined. One year later, I am blessed to call this school my home. For that, I owe special thanks to our seniors for their warm welcome and for helping this Wildcat neophyte navigate his new surroundings. Most importantly, I have learned from watching you what this school stands for and what it means to be an Episcopal Collegiate student. For that, you will always hold a special place in my heart and you will always be remembered. My only regret is that I did not get the chance to know you longer.

Prayer

In Matthew 10:16 Jesus sends his disciples out into the world, instructing them on how to go about their work...*Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.* Some 2000 years later, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, preaching to his congregation in Montgomery, Alabama captured Jesus' call to action in more modern terms.

A tough mind and a tender heart

I believe we all can understand the obvious need for a tough mind, especially in today's world, which demands increased intellectual and technical skills. Knowledge and education are essential if one is going to compete in our rapidly-changing, global world. In fact, your years at Episcopal have prepared you well as you take the next step in your intellectual journey.

But as Dr. King's reminds us, you need more.

“Tough-mindedness without a tender heart is cold and detached, leaving one's life in a perpetual winter devoid of the warmth of spring and the gentle heat of summer...The hardhearted person lacks the capacity for genuine compassion. He is unmoved by the pains and afflictions of his brothers. He passes unfortunate men every day, but he never really sees them. He gives dollars to a worthwhile charity, but gives not of his spirit...The hard-hearted individual never sees people as people, but rather as mere objects or as impersonal cogs in an ever-turning wheel...Life for him is a mirror in which he sees only himself, and not a window through which he sees other selves.”

As you pursue your life's work, I pray that you always do so with a tough mind and a tender heart.

To the Class of 2009

Your future is bright; your life's journey stands before you; and our blessings go with you.