

Greetings Mr. Garrick, Mr. Jones, Mr. Dvorak, Mrs. Shelton, Mr. Heil, faculty, family, friends, and the Class of 2022. My name is Maddox Rickens, and I'm our student council president. My fellow graduates, I am so honored to represent you all today, as now is such a pivotal time in each and every one of our lives. Our class has so many talented individuals among us, and I am proud to call myself a member of it.

In a few short months we will be parting ways to our respective futures. It seems like just yesterday I was rocking that short hair with the hard part: yikes. But today, I want to take some time to reflect on what this school has meant to us all.

Ever since we walked through the doors of this school as short, awkward and immature freshmen, we've always been presented with three words: Faith. Family. Tradition.

As a class, we embody these words better than any group I know, so let's reminisce shall we?

Faith:

When I think of the word faith: 2 things come to mind.

The first is obvious: Kairos! Kairos was a fun, special, and emotionally draining experience that allowed for us to grow closer to members of our class we probably wouldn't have been close to before. We bonded over ice breakers, skits, prayer services, and of course, passing tissues around during the "blindsides." And parents, before you ask, "Yes, I cried like a baby during it." When we returned from Kairos, the week after was amazing. Our entire class felt closer and that really set the stage for the last few months of our high school journey.

The second thing that comes to mind embodies faith in a different sense. COVID-19. I see some people giving me that "what is this kid talking about" look, but hear me out. Back on March 13, 2020 we excitedly went home expecting a 3 week long spring break, and to be back at school without a hitch. Obviously, things didn't go the way we expected. As a class, we were faced with true adversity. The rest of our sophomore year was taken away, and those in spring sports endured an even tougher loss. We came back to school Junior year and faced hybrid learning, splitting our class in half. The whole culmination of these two years was a test of the strength of our class; and we passed. We had faith in not only the fact that God had a plan for us as a class, but we had faith in our fellow classmates; that our bonds would withstand, and faith in our faculty; that they would guide us through these "unprecedented times". I stole that one from Mr. Garrick.

We eventually reunited in the fourth quarter and reestablished the complete class of 2022. A family, my family.

Family:

Ever since I was young, I used to always believe your family isn't just your blood, but it consists of people whom you choose, people who have your back, people who you love. This belief I hold is why I consider the Class of 2022 to be my family. You all had my back when I needed you most.

For those of you not aware, at the beginning of this school year on September 2, 2021, my father Jeffrey Rickens passed away. He was my everything: a mentor, an inspiration, the guy who claimed he would have beat me in a race in his "glory days", a father. He originally went to the hospital for what we assumed was a light pneumonia, but soon after, it began to spiral. One day at school, I was called out of class because he wasn't doing well, and I remember sitting in front of Mr. Garrick and the first thing I said was "Tell Jackson, Jacob, Joe, and Claire what's happening, I need them." I rushed down to the hospital

and not even an hour later those 4 were outside of the hospital, waiting for me. They sat with me, distracted me with funny TikToks, and made sure I knew they had my back. Unfortunately, a couple days later, my father succumbed to his sickness. I watched him pass away before my eyes and I was filled with anger, hatred, confusion, and sadness all at once. A pain I can only describe as my chest being pierced with the sharpest blade you could imagine. I fell into the worst depression of my life, as I tried to piece what had happened all together, and I'm still trying to do that now. But shortly after his passing, I came to the realization that this whole class is part of my family. I received cards from my classmates, I had classmates and friends wait almost 2 hours for just a minute to pay respects. Many of you on the day of his funeral took time to come down to St. Paul and stand in an honor guard, showing love not only for me, but for my mother, brother, and father as well. That love and compassion you all showed me truly saved me from the darkness of my own heart and mind. Not long after the day of the funeral, I sat down with my mom and said "I need to go back." She warned me about how I may not be ready yet and it could be really difficult, and I acknowledged that. Though, in my heart I knew I needed to see all of you because, to quote writer Aravind Adiga, "Without a family, a man is nothing." Each passing day, I began to smile more and more. The little things all of you did for me slowly built back my happiness, and I still remember them and hold on to them. Roy cheered me up with news about the latest video games. Dominique complimented me on my wild Football Friday Night Outfits. Cruz gave me one of the best shoulder massages I've ever had. Ro took the time to help me come up with ideas for a computer science project, and Luke wouldn't let me be until he saw me smile. These little things are only a small number of examples of the love you all showed me everyday, and trust me if I had the time to share them all, I would. These familial bonds we share as a class didn't just form by themselves, they were guided by the roots of tradition that run deep within the legacy of this school.

#### Tradition:

As freshmen, one of the first things we did together was attend orientation, where Mr. Garrick encouraged us to "leave the school better than we found it", and we've no doubt done so.

Here are some examples:

Over the past four years,

The AAPI Club, the Mind Over Matter mental awareness club, and the Stallions for Social Justice club were created by Vanna Giang, Gabbi D'Amico, and Devon Kerwin respectively.

We were State Champions in both girls lacrosse and girls volleyball, and State runner ups for football basketball, and competitive cheer.

We had 4 national qualifiers for National History Day: Grace Vance, Kate stone, Juliana Barnhart, and Ashley Alton

And of course this year: Pius Edzie as State Champion in Poetry Out Loud

And 3-time state champion in swimming: Bradley Mcinerny

I can confidently say we are a Class who left a legacy at St. Francis DeSales. We are the inspiration for the classes after us, just as the Classes before were to us. As a class, we would not have been able to leave such a mark on this school without the support of teachers and faculty. Whether it was support in starting new traditions, guidance in learning a difficult subject, or just having fruit snacks on hand for students who really need them, our teachers and faculty were a big factor in sculpting us into the young men and women we are today, so thank you.

Here soon, we will be going our separate ways and whether you plan to be a nurse, work in business, engineering, or plan to attend THE Solazzo Marble and Granite University, I know you will have a successful future.

Faith. Family. Tradition. Three words we were presented with at the beginning of our high school journey. Then, they seemed to hold only a general meaning as a nice looking slogan for our school. Little did we know, they would become words to define the determination of our Class, the love we all share, and the legacy we will leave behind.

Good luck to you, Class of 2022, and Go Stallions!