

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome our principal, Mr Garrick, all of the teachers and administrators, our school board president Mr. Doug Heil, parents, family and friends, and most importantly I would like to welcome our class of 2023. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Cedric Stewart

I don't know about you guys but those four years here have absolutely flown by. It feels like it was yesterday when we were freshmen just meeting each other for the first time at the icebreakers and learning how to use our ipads at orientation. To think that we have gone this far is amazing. All the long hours studying, doing homework, writing college essays have paid off. We all made it!

Coming into St Francis Desales, there was one mantra that really describes the school and describes the experiences here. And that of course is 3 words that we all know far too well: "FAITH, FAMILY, TRADITION". These are the 3 pillars of our school that serve as foundations which our school is built upon.

The basis of everything that happens here at Desales is of course Faith. The retreats and service projects that we do have really impacted me. They have opened me and I'm sure many of you to a new life of faith. Kairos was a transformative experience that brought us all together and really unified us as a class. It brought new meaning to what our faith really meant to hopefully each and every one of us.

Family is also a huge facet of St Francis Desales High School. In more ways than one. Firstly there are many students here who are second or third generation Stallions. I myself am a third generation stallion. Three of my four Grandparents went here, my parents went here, I also have aunts, uncles and cousins who went here. It is to the point where Desales is part of my family. As I walked through the halls of Desales for the first time I saw pictures of my family all over the walls. I never really realized how important this school was to my family until I got here, and after 4 years I understand why. The atmosphere and environment that is made by each and every person in this school is completely different from any other school that I have seen.

The community here also forms its own kind of family. The network of people who have come to this school is so expansive. Honestly every time I leave the state I somehow meet someone who went to Desales, or knows about Desales. Just this past year when I was in Chicago, a man came up to me, having recognized my letter jacket and asked if I went to Desales. I soon after learned that he had graduated from Desales in the 80's and was currently living in Florida. It honestly baffles me thinking about how low the chances were that I met this man. Of all the people in the world, I just so happened to walk by a gentleman who had attended the same highschool as me.

Along with the scope of our school community, this community is one that can rally together to help one another in times of need. On July 26, 2019 we lost a beautiful life in Xavier Quinn. I

wasn't truly able to get to know him as much as I would have liked to, but what I was able to know about him is that he was a kind, funny, athletic, and charismatic kid who was able to fill a room with his smile. The moment I can best remember about him is almost getting dunked on by him during basketball summer league. I'm a pretty tall guy and that just goes to show what kind of athlete he was. Despite not knowing him too well, it seemed like every time I was around him, he knew me like we were good friends. He was just a very outwardly welcoming, great guy. I can still remember singing Country Roads with the entire Freshman football team, the night before he passed away, the last memory I have of him and one that I will remember and cherish for the rest of my life.

I feel like one of the things that Xavier did so well was bring people together. I was able to meet so many people as an incoming freshman just through being able to associate with him as a teammate and competitor. I feel that in his passing he was able to bring people together in the same way. The bond that I feel with this class is almost like I'm a member of a greater family, one that was brought together to lift one another up through tough times and be able to be together through the good times.

We as a football team, during the years that I played, would always send up a prayer to him before the games. We knew that he would always have our backs and look over and protect us. I now know that he has definitely always been looking over our class as a whole. He has been with us through the good and the bad, providing us with the help and guidance that we need to overcome the adversities that we have been faced with throughout highschool and he will continue to stand by each and every one of our sides for the rest of our lives. He is a member of this family, just like any one of us.

Our community was able to rally with him and his family to lift his spirit up to Heaven. And similarly we are able to rally together against any challenge that faces any of us. Similar to a family we are able to join together and thrive through one another.

The last pillar of our school is tradition. St Francis Desales High School has always been known for our tradition rich history. A tradition of excellence.

This excellence comes in the classroom, in sports, and even in your futures beyond high school. This tradition like many others things with this school is something that we see prevalent in our class of '23. We have had David McClelland win 2 individual state championships for wrestling at 138 and 132 pounds. Along with this, our class has been at Desales for 3 state championships and has had athletes participating on two of those teams. Those being Cheer this year, and Lacrosse last year. We are hoping to add to the trophy cases with another two this year from the Boys Volleyball and boys Lacrosse teams. Along with this our class has had 3 All State athletes in Zack Rennie, David McClelland, and Cameron Hoying. Needless to say our class has some talented athletes who are able to carry on the tradition and legacy of St Francis Desales Athletics.

On top of our classes' athletic achievements, we are able to thrive within the classroom. We as a class have countless students graduating with honor rolls each and every quarter. On top of this we have 15 students graduating with highest honors, having received the distinction of Summa Cum Laude.

Our school has always been known for its academic prowess and I feel as though we have done a great job to continue this streak. It is without a doubt that each and every one of you will go on to do great things wherever you go. Be it college, trade school, the military, or the workforce. In the words of our Patron Saint Francis Desales "be who you are meant to be and be that perfectly well", take the gifts that God has given you and the experiences you have gained here at Desales and go be great. Godbless and Congratulations class of 2023.