

**Saint Teresa High School Baccalaureate Mass
Saint Teresa High School
Decatur, Illinois**

May 7, 2018

**† Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki
Bishop of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois**

Reverend Fathers, faculty, staff, students, graduates and your family and friends, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ: it is good that we are here to celebrate this Baccalaureate Mass in conjunction with the graduation of the senior class of Saint Teresa High School. It is most fitting that today we come to the altar to offer our greatest form of thanksgiving to our Lord in the celebration of the Eucharist in gratitude for the many blessings that He has bestowed upon these students over the past four years.

As we celebrate your academic achievements, it is fitting to tell a story about the world-renowned physicist, Albert Einstein, who was once traveling from Princeton on a train when the conductor came down the aisle, punching the tickets of every passenger. When he came to Einstein and asked for his ticket, Einstein reached in his vest pocket. He couldn't find his ticket, so he reached in his trouser pockets. It wasn't there. He

looked in his briefcase but couldn't find it. Then he looked in the seat beside him. He still couldn't find it.

The conductor said, "Dr. Einstein, I know who you are. I'm sure you bought a ticket. Don't worry about it." Einstein nodded appreciatively. The conductor continued down the aisle punching tickets. As he was ready to move to the next car, he turned around and saw the great physicist down on his hands and knees looking under his seat for his ticket.

The conductor rushed back and said, "Dr. Einstein, Dr. Einstein, don't worry, I know who you are; no problem. You don't need a ticket. I'm sure you bought one." Einstein looked at him and said, "Young man, I too, know who I am. What I don't know is where I'm going."¹

Perhaps you can relate to Einstein metaphorically, in that you cannot find your ticket and you have no idea where you are going in life. Or perhaps you could take this story one step further: perhaps you are not even sure who you are in relation to others and to the world.

Knowing who we are and where we are going is integrally linked to one of our deepest needs: the need to belong. We need to know where we belong, that is, we need somewhere where we feel accepted, included, wanted; somewhere where we fit in; somewhere where we know we are

not alone. The need to belong is so much more than just a part of Abraham Maslow's well-known *Hierarchy of Needs*, it is at the core of who we are as human beings.

In fact, people often go to great lengths in order to belong: joining various organizations, participating in team sports, being involved in book clubs and other groups that focus on common interests. While all of these are good things, at times we seem to forget that it is not so much about where we belong; the most important thing is to whom we belong, and that is our Lord. If we take this to heart and allow it to shape who we are as Christian disciples, we must ask ourselves, if we belong to Christ and He loves us more than we can even begin to comprehend, then how do we share that with others whom we encounter in our lives?

The saints, people who knew what it meant to share the love of Christ with those around them, give us an example of how we must live so as to one day be saints as well. One saint in particular that articulated what it means to be Christ's disciple in the world today is Saint Teresa of Avila, the patron saint after whom this school is named. She said, "Christ has no body now on earth but yours; no hands but yours; no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which the compassion of Christ must look out on the

world. Yours are the feet with which He is to go about doing good. Yours are the hands with which He is to bless His people.”

If we use these words as a framework in which to live our lives and see our obligation to direct our actions to follow Jesus’ commandment to love one another as He has loved us, it is then that we open ourselves to the grace of the Holy Spirit to follow Christ as His disciples in today’s world.

I would venture to say that there are many people in your lives who have served as models of discipleship as you have grown up. It is very likely that your parents, your first teachers, have sought to follow the direction of the Holy Spirit in loving and guiding you throughout the course of your life. Additionally, your teachers, priests and others entrusted with your care and development have led you to this moment in time. And now, as you prepare to depart from your years of Catholic education here at Saint Teresa High School, it is your turn to take these lessons and use them as an example of how to follow our Lord and share His love with those whom you meet.

Please know that, as you embark on this next chapter of your lives, you will enter a world that does not always follow the call of our Lord to

be His disciples. In fact, there will be many voices around you that encourage you to follow a way of life that promotes one's self over the good of others and entices you to indulge your personal pleasures over focusing on the happiness that comes from having a right relationship with God, which leads to the goal of eternal life in Heaven.

You have received a great blessing in your Catholic education, from which you have been given the tools necessary to distinguish between the many voices calling out for you to follow. This formation in your faith, if used properly, will assist you in discerning the path to take in the many situations you will experience and the decisions you will make in the years ahead. By living your life according to the teachings of our Lord, you will come to experience what Christ promises when He says: "I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

This abundance of life that Christ promises is one that far exceeds anything this world may offer to you. Even though you may find fleeting pleasure in worldly things, they are just that, fleeting; they will not last. Whereas the peace and joy and love that comes from following our Lord will far exceed the things of this world and will remain for eternity in Heaven, the only goal which really matters for us as Christians.

Since I had the privilege of confirming many of you, you may remember that at Confirmation Masses I have made it my custom to sing a song in my homily. Over the years I have used a number of Linkin Park songs because I thought they effectively captured and expressed the pain experienced by so many people, especially teenagers and young adults. While we are not celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation tonight, I think that the song that I have chosen this year for my Confirmation homilies is equally appropriate to this occasion. The title of the song is *Somewhere I Belong* and the refrain goes like this:

Somewhere I Belong - Linkin Park

I wanna heal, I wanna feel, what I thought was never real

I wanna let go of the pain I've felt so long.

I wanna heal, I wanna feel, like I'm close to something real.

I wanna find something I've wanted all along

Somewhere I belong.

I chose to sing this song because we all want to be healed of our pains and find that somewhere we belong. As you embark on this next chapter of your lives, know that our Lord invites you to enter into a personal relationship with Him. He will heal you of all your pains and welcome you

to a place where you definitely belong, if you put your faith and trust in Him and stay close to His loving community, the Catholic Church.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ http://www.stltoday.com/suburban-journals/illinois/patti-amsden-rev-billy-graham-s-new-suit/article_0ee93adf-8ecb-5d7b-9997-3eaca972c842.html