

In Cameron where I live one of our high school graduates is dead. Well, he's been dead for 5 years, so he never set foot into high school with his class ever since that terrible day in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. The autopsy said he had a viral infection in the brain, so this isn't one of those stories of how irresponsible kids can be especially behind the wheel of a car. This was a good kid who loved being active, played hard, went from one broken bone to another, and then one day got hit in the head with a ball at school, felt nauseated, went to the hospital, took a little treatment, went home, and to everyone's horror died in his own bed during the middle of the night. His classmates have not forgotten him, and we all feel he is graduating this year.

There are many ways to say goodbye to the people you meet at school. Some ways are a whole lot more difficult than others. It's always hard to let go, but our goodbyes open up other doors, and they invite us to consider life in a different light, to reflect on who we are and what we value.

Saul and Barnabas were ready to say goodbye in today's first reading. But before they did their friends came around to pray for them. The scene takes place in Antioch, a city in modern-day Turkey. Barnabas had shown up first because he heard that people from all over the world living there were starting to believe in Jesus. When he saw it was true, he sent for Saul, the same guy we know as St. Paul. The two of them worked with several other Christian leaders: John (also known as Mark), Symeon (also known as Niger), Lucius, and Manaen who was actually a friend of Herod. The people who now believed in Christ realized they had to have a name for themselves. Just as when you go to O'Hara High School you are also known as Celtics, this new band of friends gave themselves a name; they were known as the Christians; it was the first time anyone ever claimed that title as their own identity.

The Christians decided to send representatives out to let other people know what they believed. They prayed about who these emissaries should be. They fasted. Then the Holy Spirit inspired them to send Barnabas and Saul. This is how they said goodbye: The Christians laid hands on the two apostles; they completed their fasting and their prayer; and then they sent them off. The rest is history. You can find Christians everywhere today, even in your own home, all because the first Christians knew what to expect when you say goodbye.

Seniors, as your schoolmates say farewell to you, they are not just hoping for more locker space. They are sending you forth. They are praying for you. They admire the scholarship you have shown, your commitment to higher education, the hours you have spent in service to others, and the dreams you have for making the world a healthier, happier and greener place to live. Some goodbyes are planned out; others happen when you're not ready for them at all. But every goodbye is also a beginning. We are praying for you that you will keep these values - faith, worship and service - and begin to use them in new and better ways all the days of your life.