

Graduates, let me invite you to think over the past four years for a few minutes. Think about your first day at school, freshman year. Think of the names of two very close friends you made in high school. Think of the name of a teacher who helped you think deeper about life. Think about your family and how it has changed. Think about the hardest class you ever took. Think about God: On what day in the last four years did you feel closest to God?

A lot has happened to you in four years. A lot has happened to our world too. Terrorists unleashed attacks on New York City and Washington. Our country has gone to war in Afghanistan and Iraq. AIDS has decimated the population of Africa. The Catholic Church has been embarrassed by the behavior of our priests and the cover-up by our bishops. Pornography is more accessible on TV and the internet. The results of a presidential election have been disputed. Pollution threatens the environment. Race relations remain tense. These four years have been intense for you and for the world.

For our prayer tonight members of your class selected a scripture passage from Romans, where Paul talks about love, perseverance and evil. He says love among Christians should be genuine, and we should outdo each other in love. He says we should persevere in prayer, even when it feels useless or people make fun of our faith; we should also persevere in suffering. And Paul says you should treat your enemies with respect. Do not repay evil for evil, he says; live peaceably with everyone and do not seek vengeance. If your enemy is hungry or thirsty, give them food and drink.

Throughout your years in high school you have asked a lot of questions, and you have sought out leaders you can respect. Throughout those same years, our world has asked questions, and we seek leaders we can respect.

Graduates, we are going to need you to help us form a vision for a better world. We need leaders who have experienced joy and sorrow, suffering and struggle, people who have vision and who make the world better by the way they love, persevere and respect everyone, even their enemies. At the Last Supper, Jesus said to Thomas, "I am the way the truth and the life." Graduates, we need you to lead, and we need you to lead on the path Jesus has prepared. He is the way. You begin a new journey today. If you ever wonder where you are headed, follow the way of Christ.