

Adults want kids to grow up like us. We don't like it when kids fight with one another over petty things. We don't want kids to push each other on the playground, to disturb their neighbor during class, to raise their voice against someone in authority, to beat up on someone smaller than they are, or to disregard what society holds precious, from innocent animal life to traditional manners. We don't want kids to grow up with the wrong values. We want them to grow up like us.

Problem is, a lot of adults grow up to be like kids. We fight over petty things. We push each other when things don't go our way. We deny our neighbors the right to privacy. When someone in authority makes a decision we don't like, we complain about it on talk shows, with letters to the editor, or loudly on cell phones when people around us kind of wish we would just shut up. Sometimes we use violent, abusive language. We take advantage of our position and taunt those who are weak, including kids from our own community. We show little regard for what we should hold precious. From unborn human life to criminal human life, we want the authority over who lives and who dies. How we get to be this way is a mystery. Maybe we learned how to survive as kids but we have never learned how to survive differently as adults. So we grew up, all right. We grew up physically, but we still have to grow up emotionally as well. Adults want kids to grow up like us, but sometimes we grow up to be like kids.

In a Catholic school, we train the whole kid. We train the mind, the heart, and the spirit. We aren't perfect. Those of us in authority sometimes act like kids too. But we hold as our ideal the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. We strive to act responsibly as his followers, and we expect students here to do the same.

St. Paul calls the Colossians God's chosen ones, holy and beloved. He asks them to wear their virtues like clothing. Put on compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts," he says, "and be thankful."

Graduates, we have watched you grow into responsible, intelligent young men and women. You have put on the virtues we were hoping you would receive. And you've done more. You have taught us how to wear those virtues too. Even though adults want you to learn from us, the truth is that sometimes we learn from you. You have taught us what matters to you: how to serve your neighbor, to stand up for a friend, to challenge cheaters, to advocate for the poor, and to profess your faith in God. You have taught us many things, and for that we are most grateful.

All of us -- students, teachers, parents, and administrators -- all of us have the same calling, to be God's chosen ones, holy and beloved. On graduation day, we put down whatever divides us, and we take up the calling that unites us, to put on compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.

If our hearts are anchored there, not in anger, not in competition, not in regrets, then the peace of Christ will rule in our hearts.