



BLESSED TRINITY
CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Who is sitting in your empty chair?

Thank you Mr. O'Keefe and the graduating class of 2026 for the honor of speaking tonight. By now, you've probably noticed this chair sitting up here and wondered what it's for. Maybe you thought one lucky student will get a final rapid fire quiz. Maybe you thought Mr. Boyle finally lost it after a year of teaching this group.

This chair is empty right now. But come September, someone is going to sit in it. A wide-eyed, nervous, trying-to-look-cool student is going to walk into Blessed Trinity, and they are going to be looking for something. They won't be able to name it yet. But they'll be looking for proof that this place is safe. That they belong here. That someone is going to see them.

Yet, whether you know it or not, you already answered that question for them. You answered it every single day this year in your thoughts and deeds.

And on that note, I think we need to talk about what you actually did this year. Because this class didn't just show up. You showed out.

You stood in front of your classmates and delivered speeches that made the room and church go quiet. Real quiet. The kind of quiet that only happens when everyone realizes that the person speaking actually has something worth saying. Some of you were terrified walking up to the front of the church. And you did it anyway. That's not a small thing. That is, as Atticus Finch would say, true courage. You put on a play. You memorized lines, hit marks, managed nerves, and performed in front of an audience. You trusted each other. You made each other better. That's what a cast does. That's also what a class does, and you were both.

You ran a class election. You made arguments. You made promises. You learned that leadership isn't just about winning. It's about how you treat other people, and how you show up whether your name gets called or it doesn't. A lot of you learned something about yourselves this year in ways no textbook could teach you.

And the field trips. I'll just say this, what happens on an 8th grade field trip stays on an 8th grade field trip. But I will say that I watched you represent this school, this community, and yourselves with a kind of dignity that made me genuinely proud to be standing next to you.

All of that, the speeches, the play, the election, the trips, all of it added up to something. It left a mark on this building. On this culture. On these people gathered here tonight. On what it means to be a Blessed Trinity Tiger.

And now, back to this chair.



Once again, come September, someone is going to sit in it. And they are going to walk into something that you helped build. They're going to feel a standard in these halls that they can't quite put their finger on yet. A sense that this is a place where you stand up and speak even when your knees are shaking. Where you show up for your castmates when the lights go up. Where you compete hard, win or lose graciously, and lead with character.

They may not all know your names, but they'll feel you everywhere.

So as you walk out of here tonight and into high school, into bigger buildings, bigger classes, bigger everything, I want you to carry one question with you:

Who is sitting in my empty chair?

Who is the person coming behind you who needs someone to slide over? Who is the student standing alone before class who needs a Tiger to show them what it looks like to belong somewhere? Who needs you to walk up to the front of the room one more time, even when you're scared, and show them it can be done?

In the end, the chair doesn't stay empty for long. It never does.

And the only question is 'what kind of place you leave behind for the person who sits down next?' It has been an absolute honor to be your teacher, 8th graders, because you filled this chair beautifully. Now, go, and fill the next one. Thank you.

