

Katharine Reyes Valedictorian Speech – Seton School June 5, 2023

Rev. Fathers, dear parents, teachers, siblings, friends, and family of the class of 2023, welcome and thank you. Your love, support, and encouragement throughout our years of high school have been vital to the success we celebrate today. A special note of gratitude to Mrs. Carroll and Mr. Pennefather for the education and community you have provided us with during our time here.

My fellow graduates of the class of 2023, congratulations! We finished high school. As much fun as it would be to reminisce with you all about our time together at Seton, I was informed by my dear friend and classmate, JP Horiuchi, that he would get up and leave if I spoke too long. And since I too, am looking forward to the cake at the reception, I will be brief.

About a week ago, the Church celebrated the feast of Pentecost. The Apostles had spent nine days in the upper room, not hiding in fear, but preparing their hearts to receive the Holy Spirit. On the last day of this, the first novena, the Holy Spirit descended upon them in a great wind and tongues of fire and they proceeded to go into all the world and preach the good news.

Our time at Seton has been something like an upper room experience. Our six years in this little community were not meant to keep us hidden or overly sheltered from the world, but rather to nurture the gift of the Holy Spirit that we were given at Baptism, so that we too, can bring Christ wherever he sends us.

Now, there was no great rush of wind blowing through the Old Building when we finished our last day of classes, unless you count the gentle flutter of bats' wings in the gym. And as you can see, we don't have tongues of flame dancing above our graduation caps, although Mrs. Carroll's Religion 12 final exam was something of a baptism by fire. But every mass, every chapel visit, every St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Novena throughout our years here have given us the opportunity to answer St John Paul the Great's call to open wide the doors of our hearts to Christ. How blessed we are to have been taught by men and women who not only care about feeding our minds with their knowledge, but also care about feeding our souls with their love,

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and joy for Christ. What we are going to witness to others will have been deeply inspired by what the Seton faculty has witnessed to us.

None of us will be called to encounter the same people in the same way. The book of the Acts of the Apostles tells us that Peter's first sermon was given to a crowd in Jerusalem of Parthians, Medes, Elamites, residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia. Phrygia and Panphylia, and Egypt; visitors near Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs. Now, the fact that I was able to pronounce all those names is a testament to the excellent education one receives at Seton. Perhaps some of us will also bring the Gospel to foreign lands, but for many of us this list will look a little different. We will encounter and be called to witness to students, teachers, co-workers, subscribers to atheism, relativism, and consumerism, empiricism and materialism. Muslims and Christians and Jews, Catholics (both struggling and faithful); friends and family.

Our lives are destined to touch so many others, we most likely will never realize how many. Just look around you, this church is filled with dozens of lives you have already impacted. Our teachers for one have been positively influenced by us as we've given them many opportunities to grow in the virtues of patience and long-suffering through knowing us. How many souls God desires to reach through us, the class of 2023.

I would like to share with you a quote from a meditation by St. Cardinal John Henry Newman. He writes, "God has created me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another. I have my mission. I may never be told it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next. I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons."

The cardinal's wisdom makes it clear that God has created each of us, with the individual talents, strengths, and characteristics necessary for our specific missions. He has not committed your work to any other person. Some of us may learn it in this life, and some of us may not find out til we hear it from the mouth of God himself. But regardless of whether we are

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told our mission in this life or the next, we are called to build up the Body of Christ through love and service.

Dear fellow classmates, we've had a variety of teachers throughout our years at Seton, but one thing that every religion class we've ever had reminds us of is that whether we get married, stay single, or take religious vows, we are destined to be saints. Regardless of what degree we receive, what job we work, what social status we earn, we are called to the highest form of love. And God has promised us the grace to live out this call. Dear class of 2023, we have some amazing adventures ahead of us, what fun it will be to share them with each other at our class reunion in Heaven.