“Another year gone by…”

And what an exciting year it has been! Over the course of the last 10 months, we have experienced the whole gamut of emotions here on Monticello Ridge: from the excitement of welcoming the newest members of our family, the Class of 2015, to the despair of saying a tearful good-bye to one of our own, junior Brandon Johnson, from the anxiety of exam week to the joy of a mild winter and early spring. And now here we are, right in the middle of the most stressful time—perhaps apprehensive about exams, maybe a little overwhelmed by the workload, sad to say good-bye to friends, and looking forward to the adventures that summer may bring.

Our graduates are preparing to close one chapter and begin anew, and are experiencing a whole different set of emotions. The time is bittersweet, for sure. During this period of transition, may we all stay close to God, give thanks for the many blessings we have received over the course of the year, and take time to pray for each other and support as we move forward. Thank you for another wonderful year on Monticello Ridge! Seniors, be sure to come home and visit often. May God bless your travels, adventures, and work this summer.

See you in the fall!

“Graduation Means Goodbye”

Looking at each graduate’s face, people can see how happy and relaxed they are because they have finished homework and exams. However, in their eyes one can also see a deep sense of slight sadness because they have to say good-bye to their unforgettable and remarkable roommates, friends, professors, and all people who have been with them during their collegiate years.

Some will take pictures of classrooms, the library, and cafeteria, and others will try to remember the room numbers and residence halls in which they stayed. From now on, they will remember enjoyable times chatting and hanging out with their peers on the weekends or after stressful classes. How wonderful it was!

This new chapter also brings new challenges. It’s time to put one’s theory into practice and join the work force or continue to graduate school. As the book of Ecclesiastes says, “There is an appointed time for everything, such as a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to uproot the plant; a time to laugh and a time to dance; a time to be silent, and a time to speak…” (3:1-8).

Those who are not graduating have to come home with excitement to help parents or to work. Some may wonder what they should do. For parents, they are looking forward to seeing how their kids are changing and how mature they become after each semester. Each of us should ask, “how does this summer benefit me so that I may become useful, unforgettable, and remarkable for others?” In other words, how can we bring peace to those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of fear and worries?

“Farewell”


Languages provide numerous ways to express leave-taking, but expressing these same sentiments is not necessarily always easy either. We hear of the preparations that Jesus made with his disciples for his Ascension to the Father during the Easter Season. The disciples understandably asked themselves: “What’s next? What will this mean for us? Can we go with you? Will we ever meet again? Etc.” As best as Jesus could he tried to assure them that the promise of the Holy Spirit would make possible Jesus’ presence as Risen Lord both then and always.

None of us can quite make the same claim as Jesus. While we might want to ascend to new heights in our respective careers, chances are none of us are quite ready just now to enter the pearly gates as some like to refer to heaven. We prefer a status in which everything remains the same. Life rarely affords us such opportunities, though, especially in this fast-paced ever changing world.

For those of you who will be graduating or transferring, this year, “farewell” becomes a kind of bitter-sweet message for those whom you have come to know and cherish as dear friends. You will have certainly made your mark (not just grades, too!) during your time at Niagara. The relationships you have gained while here at Niagara will invariably change, though. Assuredly, the memories will provide a collective story that will remain a part of you long after you graduate from Niagara University. Still, change seems inevitable. Saying “good-bye” is never easy. Changes are you will likely experience these changes more than once in your lives, as well.

Now, then, do any of us deal with these anticipated changes and moments when we have to say “good bye?” Perhaps, as one who has made a number of moves in my life as a priest, I can offer a few suggestions. First of all, I recommend that you offer thanks to God for those persons and experiences which have become an integral part of your life. Tell these same persons what they have meant to you! Second, pray for them and make a point of writing, texting, calling, or e-mailing. Try to do so at least once a year at Christmas, and have generated a pretty long mailing list. These contacts, while not always in person, can still make a difference. Finally and most importantly, I urge you to draw upon faith that confirms a bond of friendship and love which never leaves us separated or alone.

I want to take this opportunity to say a fond “farewell.” I will be undertaking a new assignment as Pastor of St. Mary’s Church, Opelika, Alabama, beginning September 1st. Soon after the semester ends I will be going to study Spanish intensively. My new ministry will require that I gain greater fluency in Spanish. Thankfully I am not starting from scratch, but I do have plenty of room for improvement. I have very mixed emotions about this change since I have been fortunate to get to know so many persons over the four years at NU. I shall genuinely miss you, and I believe Campus Ministry will continue to be a vital dimension of campus life and faith development long after I am gone. I sincerely wish all of you well! If you have the occasion to do so, please contact me. My new address is: St. Mary’s Church, 1000 4th Avenue, Opelika, AL 36801. The telephone number is 334-745-8359.

Let me conclude by saying, “Ya’ll come and see me, ya hear!” Peace and best wishes!