

My Dear Graduates,

You may be interested to learn that in the days of my early youth the most popular Rock and Roll band was The Beatles. The four young Englishmen who made up the band were fabulously wealthy by the time they reached thirty years of age. So it may come as a surprise that one of the band's most popular songs was "Can't buy me love." The lesson learned by the songwriters, John Lennon and Paul McCartney was that money can provide us a life of comfort and pleasure but not what is most needed in life: love, joy, a sense of purpose and hope. Listen to the words of the song:

"I'll give you all I've got to give if you say you love me too. I may not have a lot to give, but what I've got I'll give to you. I don't care too much for money for money can't buy me love."

Graduates, your parents have paid dearly for you to be enrolled at Sacred Heart School. Over the past seven to ten years they have spent thousand of dollars for your Christian education, and I would like to think that they were wise to make such an investment.

I fully understand that life without pocket money in the summer months can be a real headache. In order to obtain what you desire, money is necessary. If you wish to attend a Miley Cyrus or Taylor Swift concert, you must have the forty dollars to purchase a ticket. If you are set on buying an expensive pair of Nike sneakers, you need big bucks! If you want to see a movie that is widely acclaimed by the public, you may have to spend fifteen dollars, which does not even include the cost of popcorn and soda pop.

Today smart phones, I pods and I-pads are considered necessary by virtually all young people. But even these gadgets eventually lose their appeal and are replaced by other more expensive things. And how many in this church remember the Cabbage Patch and Care Bear dolls? Advertisements on television encourage us to consume merchandise of which we have no need; Question: How many adults in this church are sick of seeing Billy Fucillo in one of his many commercials? There too many distractions in modern life, and too much wasted time!

That said, it is my hope that your many years of learning at Sacred Heart School may have taught you a much needed lesson, namely, that what matters most in life and what brings fulfillment and great joy are those things that come without cost. In other words, free! Let me share with you a few examples.

First, there is prayer. Whenever we pray, we do so without spending a penny. Prayer is a gift and one which plays an important role in the life of any religious person; Friendship. Calling someone your friend and establishing a special relationship with that person costs nothing. The benefits of friendship are too many to mention; Fellowship. Joining your family for a special celebration is a treat, and, again, requires no payment. And the memories of those special events remain with us for the rest of our life. Consider also a kindness shown another person. You don't expect to be paid for a kind deed. You simply wish to serve someone in need and assisting that person is its own reward.

But at the end of the day, what is most important is our desire to imitate the simplicity and poverty of Jesus. Jesus became poor for our sake. He invited us to follow him by leaving all our unnecessary baggage behind. In the sunset of one's life, material goods offer little comfort or meaning. As our society becomes more self-absorbed and selfish, Christ seems to disappear in the life of many baptized Christians. How sad! May you be spared such a tragedy.

In closing, my dear graduates, I wish to recall a song that was recorded in the first half of the twentieth century and remains popular today. The title of the song is "The Best Things in Life are Free". The words of this delightful song are memorable:

The moon belongs to everyone
The best things in life are free
Stars belong to everyone
They glitter there for you and for me
They are yours and mine

Flowers in spring
Robins that sing
Sunbeams that shine
There yours and mine.

Graduates, congratulations, best wishes and God bless you!