



By Caroline Kelly '19

Good Evening Bishop Zarama, reverend clergy, Dr. Fedewa, members of the board of trustees, educators, families, friends, and classmates.

I came into high school thinking I knew exactly who I was, and who I would be in four years. At age thirteen, my main goal was blending in. My friends and I shared the exact same extracurriculars, took the same classes, and the thought of breaking away from any of that was unthinkable.

My mom, bless her heart, encouraged me constantly to try new things and get myself involved. I tried. I was just so scared of being alone and of failing. I remember a time where I decided I wanted to go to this club meeting. I was nervous about it all day, but after school I forced myself up those stairs. I got up to the classroom, peeked in, saw no one I recognized, and immediately turned myself around.

In many ways I'm still that thirteen-year-old. I'm still scared to fail and to be alone. But, I've also been transformed. I've seen people who give their heart and soul to what they do here. I've been cared about in a deeper, more personal way than I thought was possible. I've been inspired by how hard people work and yet how lively and giving they continue to be. I realize that the energy educators and students have is fueled by a deep and amazingly genuine care for

the people around them. Gibbons shifts our focus away from ourselves, and towards how we treat and care for others.

What means the most to me about Gibbons isn't necessarily specific things I've done, but how I've been made to feel. Welcomed and valued at a student council meeting when I wasn't actually on student council. Confident and at peace in the absolute chaos of leading Freshman Welcome Day. Happy and encouraged through a seemingly impossible academic week. Held by Christ when I needed it most.

How I've felt has built character. In the face of challenge, when I've been scared, and when I've failed, the overwhelming theme has been simple. Never alone.

It's an educator my sophomore year meeting with me on many early mornings to go over tests and to review. It's an administrator walking through the halls with me, cleaning up after an event I had led unsuccessfully. It's my friend calling to check on me after a hard day and making sure I laughed before she hung up. It's my parents, letting me chat their ears off about my day every night at dinner, letting me make occasional mistakes along the way, but always being there to help me fix them.

It's reflex as a member of this Gibbons family to uplift. And even when we misunderstand, miscalculate, or lose our vision and fall, we are always picked up, dusted off, and set back on the path to try again.

Love. Pure, simple, Christian love for one another that is without a doubt evidence of God working in our lives. With no regard for outcome, personal impact, or worthiness of our time, in this community, we lift each other up time and time again.

Love is what holds us together and what takes us through our most difficult times. It is forever ingrained in us to stand by each other, to uplift and protect. We will spread out into the

world what we've discovered in this community. That we're never alone. That we are in fact loved deeply and personally through any and everything. This love, that shapes and defines Cardinal Gibbons, is what we are so grateful for.

This love is patient when it means supporting through countless attempts. This love is kind as it gives gentle advice. This love is selfless because it has no personal benefit. And above all else this love is merciful, welcoming us back to be fully included no matter what.

So thank you all. Thank you especially to our parents, for loving myself and my classmates with this blindingly beautiful love.

Thank you for stepping back and watching us grow and shine. Thank you for being in our corner, for being our first teachers, and for showing us what strength looks like. Thank you for giving of yourself, pushing us to persevere, and for being who we depend on again and again.

We love you too, blindingly and beautifully, more than our words can express to you.