

“Embrace your life journey with gratitude”

Thank you, Mrs. Barkan. I am humbled and honored to have been asked to offer some opening remarks at the beginning of this – our Catholic Schools Week Mass.

This past summer my 22 year old daughter and I embarked on a journey – a pilgrimage called the Camino de Santiago in which we spent 17 days hiking over 150 miles through the beautiful countries of Portugal and Spain, ending up in Santiago, Spain. The Camino de Santiago is a journey that I had been wanting to make for the past 15 years. But for me it wasn't a matter of WHEN I would make this journey. What mattered most for me was finding the right person – identifying the who – I was going to hike the Camino de Santiago.

I continue to be grateful that my daughter, Emily, said YES when I asked her if she'd be interested and willing to make this journey with me.

Reflecting on the many unexpected encounters and blessings that Emily and I experienced on the Camino reminded me that each and every one of us is on

our own journey. Regardless of our age, this human journey that we call life is filled with irreplaceable and often unexpected experiences. Each and every day is filled with challenges, opportunities to experience joy, love and the blessing of God's grace.

And in the same way that I continue to be grateful that my daughter, Emily said YES and accompanied me on the Camino I encourage you – better yet I challenge you – to embrace your life journey with gratitude as well. Do me a favor and close your eyes for a moment and visualize for a moment the faces of those people in your life who are supporting you, those who are walking with you, those that have said YES to you and are accompanying you on your life's journey.

Now slowly and quietly open your eyes. As you do so, I ask that you find a moment during Mass today to offer up a prayer of thanksgiving for each of those individuals. At some point this week, I encourage you to take it a step further; find the right time to thank them and let them know how much you appreciate the role they are playing on your life's journey.

This morning we gather here to celebrate the 110 year journey of our Cardinal Gibbons school community. Did you know that in 1909 – twenty

years after Fr. Thomas Price purchased the land and built an orphanage off of Western Blvd – there were only 367 Catholics in Wake County? It wasn't until the year 1924 that the Diocese of Raleigh was established – and yet that did not stop the likes of Fr. Thomas Griffin and 4 Dominican Sisters from Newburgh, NY from saying YES to the call to shape the future of Catholic education in the state of North Carolina. As a school community, we are blessed to have this opportunity to pause and give thanks for the countless individuals and religious communities who over the years have said YES and joined us on our journey and have helped mold and shape us into the Catholic high school community that we are today. Were it not for the Dominican Sisters, or the Franciscan Brothers of Brooklyn, New York or the YES provided by our very own Sr. Janet and Sr. Mary Jean who represent the 48 years of leadership and educational service provided our Gibbons community by the Sisters of Notre Dame of Chardin, Ohio we would not be the community that we are today. And let us not forget Fr. Daniel and the fraternity of Catholic priests, our Bishops and the countless men and women who have journeyed with us as educators, board members, and benefactors.

Yes, Life is a journey.

And today as we pause to celebrate all that is good about Cardinal Gibbons High School let us also embrace our life's journey with gratitude – offering to God and those who accompany us on our journey the thanks that is so rightfully deserved.

With that said, let join our voices and sing our gathering song....

Please stand.