

Closing remarks 2020

Thank you for coming today. My name is Terry Lavin Kuboski from the Class of 1969 and an Immaculata teacher and communications director since 1993. We've joined together to celebrate our commonality, which is our faith, our Spartans loved ones, and our grief.

In the earliest days of raw grief, engulfed by heavy fog, we may feel like W.H. Auden, who said about his beloved:

“You were my North, my South, my East and West,
My working week and my Sunday rest,
The stars are not wanted now; put out every one
Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun,
Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood;
For nothing now can ever come to any good.”

But with time, support of family and friends, prayer, and the realization that our loved ones would never approve of lifelong sorrow, we begin our new chapters without them. Surely we will experience a gaping hole in our hearts in the shape of our loved ones. No one else will ever fit into that space and why would we want them to do so? We accept that we are never finished with grief, because it is woven into the fabric of our lives.

Recovering will be rough. It turns us into different people. Know that we can be broadsided at any time by a memory. Understand that these pin pricks to our hearts may make us feel loss anew. Anticipating that this is all a normal part of grieving may help.

We know that our faith and being with those who cherished our beloved ones helps. A grief and faith-based community, such as this, comforts. It provides an invisible net of love, carrying us when we are weak and singing with us when we are strong. It counsels us to let the arms of faith, hope, and friendship cradle us, so we can live our best possible lives. It tells us to reinvest in ourselves, honoring our loved ones to the fullest, seeking joy every day. We realize that strength can be contagious, so we must be strong for each other and lead by example.

How can we help those who are grieving? The story of Job and a selection from A.A. Milne's classic reiterates the same message: just being there helps. When Job's three friends heard of his troubles, they met to sympathize with him and comfort him. They could hardly recognize him. Then they sat on with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they understood his great suffering.

In Milne's story Pooh and Piglet are worried about their friend, Eeyore and asked if he were ok. Eeyore answered, "Am I okay? Well, I don't know. Right now I am Sad and Alone, and Not Much Fun To Be Around, so I don't bother with anyone. So Piglet and Pooh sat down, next to a surprised Eeyore. "We're sitting with you, because as friends, we are there for you." And the three sat in silence; somehow, almost imperceptibly, Eeyore felt a little bit better. Because Pooh and Piglet were there. No more; no less.

I would like to mention those whom we have lost since our last Mass with the help of retired NBA player and Coach Brian Shaw. Tragically, his father, his mother and sister died in a car accident. For a long time Brian struggled. "Instead of focusing on my loss, I concentrated on my blessings. I considered how lucky I was to have them as a big part of my life. Changing my prism of grief to one of appreciating the joy and memories of my family is when I found peace."

What blessings did our recently departed Spartans bring to us? I had the privilege of teaching with Gerri Beyfuss, Sr. Anne Marie Markoe and was taught by Sr. Marian Dolores. Sr. Marian Regina, Tom Perry, and Kay Kelly were all impactful educators here.

Music was a passion for Tom Julak, Bill Dziugan, and Sean Franks.

Whether it was Maine, the Jersey shore, flying the skies, the natural habitat of Africa, or just being in the great outdoors, John Tosco, Adrienne Crofford Isabella, Ed Mulet, Lynda Wildgen Burnett, and Jeff Fischer were truly happy.

Service to others and showing fortitude with fighting health issues characterized Mickey D'Heron and Joe Hoey.

Devotion to family as children, spouses, parents, siblings and aunts best defined Billy Sigle. Albert Macchi, Linda Michalak, Hope Loeffler, and Mary McCarthy Aeschliman.

What will be missed about Mary Ellen Simmons Nissen, Eric Christie, Bernadette Niezgoda, and Sarah Warger were their ready smiles, concern for others, gentleness, and sincerity.

Mike Chisari combined his passion for the Civil War with his devotion to the Yankees, Redskins, and Auburn

Great teachers Mary Catherine Donlan Kohler and Robin Maitra, who will be inspiring us from heaven

My good buddy, Walter Hart, who was an important part of my high school memories

An Ed Bowlby memory about Gene Kelly. In business class the students create a product. Gene developed a soup that came out hot, right out of the can. He opened it and steam came out and the class was amazed. A plus project. But, of course, all had a good laugh when they found out he had preheated the can.

My mentor, Sr. Mary Birster: she brought me to IHS as a teacher. Her leadership and insight elevated this school and her instinct for helping those teens struggling was remarkable. Her teachers, parents, and students considered her a rock star

So what do our honored guests, these nearly 500 Spartans listed in the booklet, want to teach us? They tell us:

Let Psalm 118:14 guide you: "My strength and courage is in the Lord."

Comfort yourself in picking one thing we enjoyed together and do it. Think of one quality you admired about me and embrace it. Help me to live on through you.

Wrap yourselves with your memories and put your faith in God, and as true Spartans, march on. Be guided by Jesus' words: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest."

This week I wind up my 27 year career here at Immaculata. For 31 years—including my time as a student—I have ridden up and down Mountain Ave. Perhaps not as long as Mr. Frauenheim, but still a lot. What I am most proud of, beyond the joy of teaching English and Journalism to over 1000 Spartans, is this special liturgy. Sixteen years ago, I met with Msgr Brennan to get his blessing for this Mass. I was inspired by the personal grief that my sister, Nan, and I struggled with over the sudden death of our brother, Tommy. The first year we barely had 100 people. But each year the attendance grows, as we reach new Spartans suffering loss and know that some of our original community are no longer with us. This mass exemplifies that even long after you walk these halls, you are important to this community. You are prayed for every First Friday. We live the concept of Once a Spartan, Always a Spartan. True Spartan Spirit.

In addition, at last year's Mass, we introduced Our Guardian Angel Scholarship, which is another way to memorialize our deceased Spartans and those parents who supported our Immaculata education. Last June six current students received financial aid through the Guardian Angel program, emphasizing the continuum of the Spartan experience, showing how we are all connected. Thank you to all who contributed to the Scholarship Program, especially those classes who remembered their deceased classmates.

Immaculata thanks the families of those Spartans remembered today for allowing us to honor them in our community. As has been our tradition at the end of the Mass, we ask all alumni to stand and show our support for all of the grieving families. For those who can stay, we have refreshments and memorabilia in the cafeteria for a time of fellowship for this beautiful community. A room has been reserved at 22 West for those who wish to gather for a meal. Stay well and God bless.