

Presidential Address - Mass of the Holy Spirit - 9-13-2015 - GJG

Thank you.

Fr. Provincial, Chairperson Geonnotti, Mayor Joe, Representative DiGiralomo, Board members, benefactors, fellow Holy Ghost Prep colleagues, alumni, family, friends, and all members of the HGP community...

As many of you may know, the school has received and I have received some good press recently. Articles in the Courier Times and Inquirer about the new presidency, great coverage about athletics, the cover story in Suburban Life Magazine, even a top 100 ranking among best Catholic boys schools in the country. Ten weeks on the job and this could all go to a new President's head! Well the other evening my wife answers the phone and tells me, "It's the New York Times, and they want to talk to **you**." Well I was so excited, but also just a bit nervous. So I took several deep breaths – you know, forensics breathing... the kind that Mr. Figliola and Mr. Buettler would teach us – to get ready for my interview. I picked up the phone and said in my most professional voice: "Greg Geruson," and on the other end I hear... "Hi, this is the New York Times... we are looking to speak to the head of household? We'd like to know if you would be interested in a subscription to the New York Times? I know, very funny.... Well, joke's on them, because anyone

who knows me and my family knows that I'm not the real head of my household.

Holy Ghost Prep. I am thrilled to return to Holy Ghost. I love Holy Ghost Prep, and I am passionate about this school. As I said the other evening at Back to School Night, to me, this is home. And if you are at all like me, there is no better feeling in the world than going home.

Holy Ghost Prep is a mission-driven school. Its unique Spiritan mission defines who we are, what we do, and what we aspire to be. Ours is a mission that connects a rich past with a growing and changing present, and looks to an exciting future. And it's the future of Holy Ghost Prep that I'd like to talk about today.

In Twelfth Night, Shakespeare wrote: "Be not afraid of greatness – some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them." Inspiring words for advancing the individual human condition. But what if we're considering what it means to be a great organization, a great school? In this case, the **combination**, the sum total of the individuals and their actions and interactions, helps drive greatness.

Noted management expert and author Jim Collins, writing about great organizations in his seminal work "Good to Great," said, "Greatness is not a function of circumstance. Greatness, it turns out, is largely a matter

of conscious choice, and discipline." Conscious choice.

Discipline....We'll come back to that.

I suspect that everyone here today considers HGP a great school. I will be the first to say so. But today, I propose that we raise the bar. To set us apart, to differentiate us from the crowd. I submit to you today a new aspirational vision for our school. Holy Ghost Prep aspires to be the premier Catholic college preparatory school.

Let me repeat that. **Holy Ghost Prep aspires to be the premier Catholic college prep school.**

What do we mean when we say this? Let's parse our vision statement to examine a few key words.

First: the word **Aspires**... Something not yet attained, something to strive for, to pursue. This is an **aspirational** vision. In practice, the goal of achieving this vision is not as important as the path that we follow in pursuit of the vision. What matters most are the things we do along the way – new programs we introduce, enhancements to the curriculum, a laser focus around our most critical goals and tactics – all in pursuit of this vision.

And our aspirations, our efforts to stretch as a school and as individuals, will enable us to Soar Higher.

Second, the word **Premier**... The top, the best, to be recognized as such. What does it mean to be premier? This is part of a conversation that we have already begun – with administrators, faculty, trustees – and we will continue with alumni, students and parents. This conversation is vital to the future of Holy Ghost Prep. We no longer want to be recognized as the "best kept secret in Bucks County." Rather, in every conversation about schools throughout the Delaware Valley, we want to be mentioned among the best. What are the best prep schools, Catholic schools, private schools, independent schools – whatever list, whoever is saying it, we want to be in THAT conversation. And we need you to help us do that. If you are telling two friends about Holy Ghost, now tell four. If you already discuss the school among your neighbors, now tell people at work. If someone mentions another school, you bring up Ghost. **Soar Higher.**

Third: the words **College Prep**... Collegiate. College like. Preparation for college. If we are going to prepare students for college, part of our responsibility is to begin to provide them with the college-like experience: a beautiful campus, greater freedom, personal responsibility, academic excellence – these are already hallmarks of Holy Ghost Prep. But we can do more – Give to more students, offer greater preparation, more resources, connections.

For example:

We're doing more through College Guidance. We've just invested additional resources to integrate a college guidance course at the beginning of sophomore year, to provide an SAT prep course for all sophomores as part of the curriculum, and to add a college guidance coordinator to the staff. Because outcomes matter.

We're doing more through a new Leadership / Externship / Program. Beginning this year we'll kick off a pilot project for select juniors. Through a competitive application process, these juniors will be matched with successful alumni who work in areas of a particular interest to these students. A plastic surgeon, a structural engineer, an accounting partner – all have already agreed to participate. The heart of the program will be a 2 to 3 day externship with the junior, working with the alumnus on the job.

We're doing more through an Executive in Residence Program. Twice this year, the school will host an alumni executive who will spend the day at Holy Ghost. Meeting with students or student groups. Engaging with faculty and administrators – to share their stories, their successes, and the lessons they've learned.

Fourth, and one of our most important differentiators in our vision, is the word **Catholic**. Our Spiritan Mission is unique. This mission manifests itself in many ways, but most noteworthy in our faculty's commitment to their craft: They are not simply teachers. This is not just

their job. For them, it is a **vocation**. Their work encompasses a commitment that they've made to our school, to our Spiritan mission, to our traditions, and to the **formation** of your sons. This mission focuses on *educating their minds* to be intellectually-curious critical thinkers, and also to *open their hearts* to the courage, wisdom, and understanding of these gifts of the Holy Spirit needed to serve the poor and make a difference in the lives of others. **Matter more.**

Today, we have a great service program reaching local sites like St. Francis Inn and Libertae, regional sites like St. Mark's Parish and School in Harlem, and International sites like the Dominican Republic. I hope to expand on these experiences, offering students more immersion programs to engage those most in need and to do so for multiple days at a time.

Later, this year we will also introduce the Frank Frederico Student Investment Fund. As part of the AP Economics course, students will have the opportunity to learn what it's like to invest in the market, with access to \$25,000 that they will be responsible for managing and investing. While the program is still in its germination stage, through a generous gift of the Frederico family, the Fund has already been established. Then, at the end of the year, the students will come together to function as a philanthropic board. They will look at their earnings and then determine what Holy Ghost Prep or Spiritan mission-based need could benefit from those dollars. **Matter more.** Holy Ghost Prep aspires

to be the premier Catholic college prep school. Achieving this vision will take time. We'll have to learn from our mistakes. We'll have to work harder **and smarter**. But, in doing so, we know that greatness is our conscious and deliberate choice.

We choose to be great. We choose to be premier. We choose to soar higher, to matter more.

With new resolve and our hearts full of love for this place we call home, we are Holy Ghost.