

Good evening. It is a pleasure to welcome you here to this special evening of celebration. This year, the academic year 2010-2011, has been an extraordinary year for Pope John Paul II High School. It is a year of growth and accomplishment, achievement and fulfillment. It is a year of success and validation, and a year of payment in full for the many who have invested in our dream and vision.

It is right and good in this arrival year to stop, look around, and celebrate. Achieving our opening on September 4, 2007 and our Dedication on September 25, 2007 was a major accomplishment and a special memory that many of us will have forever. While those days were final accomplishments in one sense, the very real task of establishing a high-quality, mission-drive, and worthy program and school community was only beginning. If getting the school open was phase one, then the work of these past 3 and one half years – the creation of a living school community of excellence -- has been phase two. The seal of approval represented by NEASC accreditation tells all of us that the work of phase two has been accomplished.

Let me share some of the findings of the visiting committee – findings that tell the tale about what is special and unique to this school community at this time. From the report:

- The Visiting Committee experienced the mission of the school “to communicate Christ” from our first moments at the school to the very last. Pope John Paul II High School is an extraordinary opportunity for its students to develop their academic, athletic, and social abilities in an environment wherein the Gospel message is lived on a daily basis.
- The overall impression of the Visiting Committee is that Pope John Paul II High School is an absolutely wonderful experience from every perspective.
- It is true that the mission statement is posted about the building. However, the Visiting Committee was most impressed with the level to which the entire school community has integrated the core message to “communicate Christ” into their thinking. One would expect administration, faculty and staff to articulate the school’s mission; however, it was the parents and students who spoke most often as to how the mission has influenced their experience at PJPIHS.

Two parents who regularly volunteer their time at the school, came to tears as they expressed the impact which the school has had on their students’ lives. The Visiting Committee was moved by the depth to which parents experience the mission of the school.

- Attempting to calculate the number of hours invested in the development of the school ultimately became impossible. The building of the school and its initial success is very much a product of the faculty's dedication to the school's mission and the success of its students. The student experience section of this report reflects only a fraction of the gratitude which the students and parents have for the faculty.
- The students are friendly, articulate, and proud of their school and their faculty. They are very well aware of what is being presented as curriculum and they seem confident that they are being well prepared to be competitive with other schools. They feel that they are being given an education that is based upon high standards and that they are being academically challenged. The students appreciate the small size of their classes. They know that they

won't "fall through the cracks" because, their teachers know them by name and know them as individuals.

Most of all I wish to read to you this summary of the many hands who helped us along to where we are today:

"A number of entities have made Pope John Paul II High School's launching possible:

1. The Diocese of Fall River has been most generous in its financial support, administrative services and leadership. To date, the diocese has supplemented the school's budget by approximately \$750,000 and plans to extend its financial support for the near future.
2. The administration of the school, most notably the head of school, has brought extraordinary mission-bound vision to PJPIIHS. The entire faculty and staff are notably energized by the administration's vision and the manner in which this vision is brought to life by the daily decisions and actions which create this school environment.
3. The Advisory Board of PJPIIHS includes individuals who are extremely committed to the mission of PJPIIHS. The board includes visionaries and financial supporters who have long awaited the opening of a Catholic high school on Cape Cod and who value every inch of that facility.
4. One cannot underestimate the support of the parents who send their daughters and sons to PJPIIHS. These parents took a huge leap of faith when they chose to enroll their children.
5. The students are also founders in this grand vision of PJPIIHS. They have moved through a program as it developed. What an extraordinary experience for these students! Their willingness to make this endeavor work is most notable, in light of the growing pains which necessarily accompany such a "start-up."

Everyone can see that each of us has had a hand in what we celebrate tonight. Each to one degree or another has a stake, has a horse in the race, skin in the game, and has known or learned that faith means not knowing for sure. Jesus tells us "blessed are those who have not seen and yet believed." Each of us has shared in the leap of faith. Let each then feel the joy, validation, satisfaction, and fulfillment of landing safely on the other side.

You have my word that, while we celebrate our accomplishments tonight, I know that this phase two is a stepping stone to further improvements in our school and greater accomplishments. There is more work to be done, sacrifices to be made and milestones to attain, and we are ready to tackle them.

Speaking personally, the period of time since my arrival in July, 2006 has been marked by a range of emotions. I have enjoyed my homecoming and return to life in southeastern Mass. I have been terrified at times with the responsibility of Pope John Paul II High School and what I got myself into. It has been the most challenging time in my professional life, and I can say most sincerely that I could not have done my part without the incredible generosity of donors, especially Mr. Frank Ward and Mr. Paul Birmingham, friends, Dr. Milot, teachers, staff, students, and in a special way, parents. Parents, you have helped me believe. Your faith in me and this school have been absolutely necessary and I have relied on your faith to keep up my end of the bargain. Thank you for being here to share in your accomplishments.