

Mr. Bocan, Mr. Lipchik, Mrs. Landahl, Father Bob, faculty, parents, family, friends and fellow classmates, good evening.

It is an honor to stand before the Geibel Catholic High School class of 2011. I have witnessed and been a part of so many “great things” in these past four years, and I foresee even greater things in our future. In a graduating class of so many honor students who were also competing for this title of valedictorian, I feel as though I am sharing this podium with you. With the support of our teachers we challenged each other and strived to be better students and better people. With the direction of our coaches, our sports teams accomplished records that many said such a small school could not achieve, including a hockey championship. We pulled off a musical that was considered so difficult that many said our musical director was insane. Individually we produced an all WPIAL baseball player, a football Extra Effort Award winner, a coal queen, a Congressional Art Award student, an Eagle Scout, and even a fountain builder, just to name a few. We also had three foreign exchange students who virtually threw a dart on the map of the United States and chose Geibel Catholic High School in Fayette County for their education. They are leaving here today knowing they made the right choice, and we are glad they made that choice.

Noted psychologist Dr. Joyce Brothers once said, “Success is a state of mind. If you want success, start thinking of yourself as a success.” What will allow the members of our class who accomplished so much in high school to continue these accomplishments throughout the next steps of life? Bill Gates, Steven Jobs, Mother Theresa, and Albert Einstein are all excellent models that we may choose to live by. However, at one point in their lives they were all ordinary people like us with dreams and

goals. But what set them apart from all the others and allowed them to risk everything and pursue their passions?

Pittsburgh author and successful entrepreneur Razi Imam spent 15 years studying successful individuals and believes he has found the answer to that question. To describe the inner energy required to have the drive to become successful, Mr. Imam had to go across cultures and came up with the concept of junoon. Spelled J.U.N.O.O.N. Junoon is an ancient Persian Arabic word that quite literally means a positive obsession with something. However, the term more refers to a state of mind that drives an individual to accomplish his or her goals to be successful and happy. This state of mind is what makes seemingly ordinary people achieve extraordinary things. Mr. Imam states that this junoon force has existed in all of us since we were children, but life and all the harsh realities we face can extinguish it. Mr. Imam explains this concept in his book by saying “Junoon is an internal force, an inner-energy we all have that gets us into a state of positive obsession to achieve our one goal that will give us maximum satisfaction and happiness.” We start by having an inspiration and setting a goal. Then we support our goal with logic and a plan. Finally, we develop our goal with intense focus. The people who find their junoon are the driven individuals who persevere and have a bigger role to play in life. These people want to be apart of something great and to make a difference, whether the goal is to run a marathon, to graduate from college, to start a business, to change a career or to parent a happy child. These are the people who don’t let “brick walls” get in their way.

When I look into the eyes of the Geibel Catholic High School Class of 2011, I see these individuals, my classmates, as a powerful force of high achievers who will,

hopefully, find their inner junoon. This is only the beginning of the “great things” we will accomplish.

As our journey continues, our future successes will be built on the strong foundation made possible by the values our loving families and teachers have instilled in us, by fond memories and life lessons learned with friends, by a strong faith in God, and by a confident sense of who we are.

Congratulations friends! Never let your motivation and energy diminish despite life’s hardships. Let the Class of 2011 commence with even more success.