

Welcome and greetings on behalf of the senior class of 2009! I am truly privileged and honored to be representing such an amazing class, the first Veritas graduates to complete all six years. So I would like to share the incredible importance of education and how this amazing school has personally impacted me.

Veritas has equipped my classmates and me with the tools necessary for our now “lifelong pursuit of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty.” Among these tools are included the development of our ability to read properly, the ability to write clearly and persuasively, and the development of our ability to discuss and communicate (Socratically of course) what we perceive to have meaning. These tools are only three of the main byproducts of our proper education here at Veritas.

But first, it is important to clarify what is meant by a “proper” education. Education is not what many assume it to be. It is a continuous process and way of life necessary to help gain knowledge and better understanding directed towards the name of our school-Veritas/Truth. As humans, it is not possible, as Plato says, to impart knowledge from one man to another: “education is not what the professions of certain men assert it to be. They presumably assert that they put into the soul knowledge that isn’t in it, as though they were putting sight into blind eyes” (Plato. VII.518b). Thus, teaching is something different, a type of “reorientation” helping us grow accustomed to seeing the truth. Plato also refers to teaching as a “power in the soul of each, and that instrument with which each learns—just as an eye is not able to turn toward the light from the dark without the whole body—[we] must be turned around from that which *is coming into being together* with the whole soul until it is able to endure looking

at that which *is* and the brightest part of that” (Plato. VII.518c). Therefore, this sort of education is an “art of turning around...not an art of producing sight in it” (Plato. VII.518c). And that is how we are “taught” or “reoriented” here at Veritas.

Clearly, the importance of good habits affects our perception of the truth and our ability to rationally act on what *is* the good. This is probably why our school and our parents have directly played a role in attempting to turn our vision properly toward that which is beneficial to our soul, versus any sort of harmful image. As a seventh grader the fear of receiving a bad grade from our teachers and other “mechanical” disciplines were used to spur our change in habits. But now we are aware that everyone desires meaning in life and in fact should be spurred by wonder in our quest for knowledge. Aristotle was right, it does make rather all the difference how we are habituated in our early days and thus I am extremely thankful for my proper education (Aristotle. II.1.1103b). Or as the Elder Zosima says in *The Brothers Karamazov* “only a little, a tiny seed is needed: let him cast it into the soul of a simple man, and it will not die, it will live in his soul all his life, hiding there amidst the darkness, amidst the stench of his sins, as a bright point, as a great reminder” (294). Hopefully we will never stifle our teachings, but together let us develop that seed to love and serve the Truth which was planted here at Veritas. So, even if Mr. Sullivan is right, that our individual names will probably be forgotten, the impression our teachers have personally made on us (and vice versa) will hopefully never die.

The greatest fruit from our labor here at Veritas is not what I mentioned earlier, but our now apparent “want of education” and desire to use our free will properly. Since free will is choosing that which we believe to be the good, our class will hopefully be prudent in our practical wisdom, realizing the responsibility that our beliefs play in the world. Dante goes even further, saying, “love is the seed in you of every virtue and of all acts deserving punishment” (Dante 296). Therefore, we should avoid erred mental love and take advantage of our love of the Truth and the ultimate Good.

Humane Letters especially has helped me personally wrestle with and develop the beginning of my faith and beliefs. I will never forget the books and discussions which have so directly turned my ideas and perception of what in fact should be pursued. (And it’s probably a bad sign when a third of your classmates mention the cave metaphor when signing your yearbook!) As St. Paul says to the Philippians, “whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things” (Phil. 4:80). So, I better pursue excellence in these satisfying true, good, and beautiful things—which this school too holds so highly—and continue in my never-ending quest for knowledge.

We, the class of '09, realize how undeserving we are of such great teachers and the habituation we have received here. And now as we leave Veritas, we realize the necessity to share what we have learned and perhaps be like our teachers in redirecting others to the Truth. So as St. Matthew says, “let your light so shine before men, that

they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).