

To: the Friends of the Brothers,

After entering my classroom at 7:00 on a Tuesday morning with a cup of coffee in hand, I walk toward my desk. Little did I know what my day was going to hold and that I would have the opportunity to put it into print for the Friends of the Brothers.

Sitting in my chair, I turn to reach for some papers to grade and notice the Christian Brothers admissions poster on the back wall in my class. The poster's statement of "Live Life Fully" seems to stand out more than usual. The more I look at it; the more I realize how we at Christian Brothers High School (CBHS) do live pretty busy and full lives.

Still ^{at} my desk, I recall our previous poster theme of "Educating the Mind, Body, and Soul" and become aware of the connection between the two slogans. These different aspects of our human make-up must be present for our students' education to be truly full.

After I finish preparing for class, a definite necessity because of our students' high academic level, I read my Christian devotional and say a few prayers for some extra patience, my family, and several students. The bell soon rings to start the school day.

I have no A set, but I do have 30 yards of dirt coming in the morning for our fields and have to work out the logistics for the delivery. I forgot to talk with Joe Guilherme, the head of maintenance, and hear he is upset about the large quantity. I call the company donating the dirt (Thank you Silverado.) and ask if they can sneak in 20 yards instead.

In my B set class after prayer, the beginning of every class at CBHS, I conference with the students on their essays. This works well with the students to give meaning to the abundance of ink used on their essays. The bell rings for break.

The intercom calls my name to tell me the delivery truck is waiting in the back for me. The driver follows my directions on where to dump the dirt, and it barely fits. I am relieved.

Back at class with 32 students filing in for D set, I find myself in a difficult class size to conference. After starting with "Let us Remember . . .," I attempt to conference. Two students down to the office later, another two to speak with me after class and five large spitballs on the ground—these are the likely sources causing the disruption. Class ends!

The extreme contrast in size of my next two classes brings on a sigh of relief. The smaller class size allows extra time to work with my students. The two students sent out in D set come back to apologize for their poor choices. I write a note to myself to thank Dave Jablonsky, Dean of Students, for keeping them accountable.

The bell rings and I have lunch duty. A student walks in wanting some help with his essay that is due in about a week. I ask him for his essay and said, "Follow me."

As we walk toward the cafeteria, I read his essay and tell him what he needs to work on. I notice his inordinate steps. He has cerebral palsy and along with it, a huge heart and a

brilliant mind. Imagine an "A" student wanting to improve his writing even more. I ask myself, "Why is he here when these other students from my class should be asking for help?" But I soon answer my own question, "That is why he is an 'A' student." After I finish, the student shows his appreciation with a thank you and a smile.

I proceed to help with the senior lunch line that is deemed sacred by the exiting students. After weeding out the juniors in the line, I hear a few "Thanks Bro," a term of sentiment picked up from my past as a student at CBHS, which I now use for the male students on campus to show them either appreciation or concern .

Later, I speak to another student in the cafeteria to see how she is doing. This young woman had some personal problems and did not go out for her favorite sport this year. I spoke to her father over the weekend to make sure she was doing okay. As a sophomore, she was one of the better players in the area, but I realize her welfare and academics are the priority. It is tough as a coach letting her go. But I must. She will be missed.

A few of my "Get off the heater please" remarks that I learned from our former Dean Jack Witry and a couple of rounds by the seniors with an occasional "Take care of business with your shirt please-that's a tuck in, not a turn in. " or "Take a minute and pull up your pants before they fall off please."—comments considered "regulating" by the students. (I claim literary license here.) Half of getting them to follow the rules is the respect that I try to give them in the approach and the "Thank you, I appreciate it," after they do what I ask.

A couple of, what I term, "bonchheads" get a little rambunctious in the cafeteria, but all is pretty quiet. I give myself license with this term because in all reality those students remind me of myself as a CBHS student. That's why it is difficult sometimes holding back my laughter at their behavior and keeping a serious face when I address their choices.

The bell rings for the end of lunch, and I help the financial aid students in cleaning up the cafeteria. Not wanting the stigma of their family's financial situation known, they wait for all the students to leave before they start cleaning up.

On the way out to class, I pick up a few pieces of litter (another Witry rule) and see in the corner of my eye a student out of dress code. I approach him in a rather stern manner as evidenced by his shrinking back and stuttering response: " I 'm... I'm... I'm a visitor." (Note to self: spend more time praying for patience.)

After an apology, I encounter once again the beneficial curse of my Catholic guilt in action. (my K-12 Catholic education hard at work) My guilt reminds me when I don't treat people with the dignity and respect that they deserve. As an authority figure over others, humility becomes a necessity in addressing that guilt. Otherwise, it becomes very easy to get caught up in the power of the position and to forget the value of each person.

As our Lord shows us, to truly lead is to serve in both disposition and action. There lies the humility in faith. There lies the need for truth, guilt, apologies, and a thank you. There lies

the importance of my asking God for help everyday for awareness of my actions and the acceptance of my responsibility for my decisions. (okay, okay, okay enough preaching)

G set goes smoothly along with C set which is my preparation set at the end of the day. (Go figure.) The school day ends with a 2 o'clock dismissal, a community meeting, prayer again to start the meeting, and a reminder to have the WASC box ready by Monday.

After leaving school in a hurry, I pick up my daughter at preschool, play with her for a little while, and take her to her grandparent's house. (Thank God for caring grandparents.)

I coach one of our spring sports, so I must be at our 4 o'clock scrimmage at Hiram Johnson High School. Out on the field our girls seem kind of complacent. Quite a few of our students don't play over the summer, so it takes them about a third of the season to actually get started. It's not something we control around here. Fortunately, they are talented enough that they can still pull off league titles, and we work them hard during practice. A prayer started the game and a 3 to 1 outcome ensued, our loss. (Wait till later.)

After getting my daughter, feeding her and telling her the babysitter would be coming soon to watch her, I soon realize she is not very happy with me. With a basketball playoff game to proctor at 7:00, I must leave.

Once there, everything seems pretty calm. Some of our enthusiastic male fans get a little too excited with the officiating, but so do I. Our basketball team wins. At the end of each game, win or lose, home or away, the team can be seen on their knees praying with their coach in the middle of the floor. (This is definitely a private school advantage.)

Some of my last year, "peanut gallery" students ask me to "hang out," so they can play a "pick up" game of basketball in the gym. I agree. (Note: I need to learn to say "no" more.)

The old guy with the worn basketball shoes and balding head (me) doesn't get hurt and makes a couple of decent moves. The important part is that I don't embarrass myself too much because I would definitely hear about it from the students the next day if I had.

Driving home all sweaty and feeling the muscles tightening a little, I am revisited by old Mr. Guilt. An entire day goes by, and I spent only 50 minutes with my daughter. I get home, thank the baby sitter with a kiss on the cheek (my mother) and go to my daughter's room to give her the customary hug and kiss goodnight along with the pulling up of the bedcovers.

Still feeling guilty and knowing she is asleep, I reach down to go through the motions, and I'm surprised. When I kiss her, she smiles with her eyes closed, grabs my left arm, and hugs it. She remains hugging my arm and falls back to sleep. Mr. Guilt leaves. As I rub my daughter's back with my other hand, I feel very thankful for that moment and for the fact that everyday isn't as full as today's.

Sincerely,

One of the many busy teachers at CBHS