

Welcome parents, family members, and friends of the graduating class - and congratulations to the class of 2011. You are an extraordinary group of young men and women and I am proud of each and every one of you. You have made my first year as Principal a delight. Thank you for all you have contributed to Christian Brothers High School.

Mark Twain once said, “Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines (or as true sailors say, “bo-lins”). Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.”

Good advice for graduates at the beginning of the next phase of life, particularly when the world awaits and there are few responsibilities to restrain you. But there is also something to be said for the security and protection of safe harbors. I have been, for most of my life, a safe-harbor kind of person. I traveled and explored, but I rarely ventured beyond my comfort zone. The problem with this is that I never pursued some dreams. If you were to ask your parents or grandparents, they would probably share some of the same feelings about safe harbors. By God’s grace, that safer course led me to my current calling in education which has been a great career. But I often wonder what would have happened had I thrown off the bowlines (bolins) and sailed away from the safe harbor.

My father was an adventurer. Self-educated and intensely curious, he was always dreaming up new ways of experiencing life at its fullest. He built and flew airplanes and also had a deep love of the sea. He single-handedly built a sailboat, a 32-foot ketch, and together with my mother, they sold their home and sailed away with the intention of circling the globe. He was a can-do type of individual—he never shied away from any challenge, never failed to seize an opportunity, and never lay at anchor when an adventure beckoned. And he modeled good life lessons, even when things didn’t always go as planned.

He also taught me a little about sailing. It was always a mystery to me that boats could take different routes with the same wind, that they were not at the mercy of the wind’s direction; I learned that the sails and rudder took care of that. The set of the sails is key. My British son-in-law has a sailing expression which I like: He often says of another person, “I like the cut of his jib” which means someone is a solid, trustworthy fellow

who is able and confident. As the cut of the jib or foresail will determine the success of a voyage, so individuals will display character by the choices they make which leads to success. I apply it here to our graduates—seniors, I like the cut of your jib! Your training and experiences these last four years, as well as all the years before, have contributed to the development of your fine character, have brought you to this successful completion of your high school years, and will ensure the success of your future voyage in life.

Like the set of the sails, the set of your souls has been carefully nurtured in your time at Christian Brothers. Trust your faith in God's continual presence in your lives as an anchor that holds during times that are either calm or full of strife—it is not the force or direction of the winds that buffet us that make the difference, but the set of our souls, the anchor of our faith in Christ, that determines our ultimate success as people. When winds buffet and storms come, remember what James Hudson Taylor said: "It does not matter how great the pressure is. What really matters is where the pressure lies - whether it comes between you and God, or whether it presses you nearer His heart."

As you go forth from here, explore, dream, discover – there will be ups and downs, calm seas and stormy times, but all will be well. The good thing, as Abraham Lincoln said, is that "The best thing about the future is that it comes only one day at a time." My hope for you is that the Lasallian values you have experienced during your time at Christian Brothers have given you both a strong anchor of faith and a warm breeze of hope to help you move forward on your way day by day. Oliver Wendell Holmes said it this way:

"I find the great thing in this world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving: To reach the port of heaven, we must sail sometimes with the wind and sometimes against it, but we must sail, and not drift, nor [only] lie at anchor."

Whatever direction life takes you, always cherish the time you were given to be a student at Christian Brothers High School and remember you will always be a Brother's boy or Brother's girl. We'll miss you, but we know you will take these words with you for a lifetime: Let us remember . . . (we are in the holy presence of God) and Live Jesus in our hearts . . . (forever).