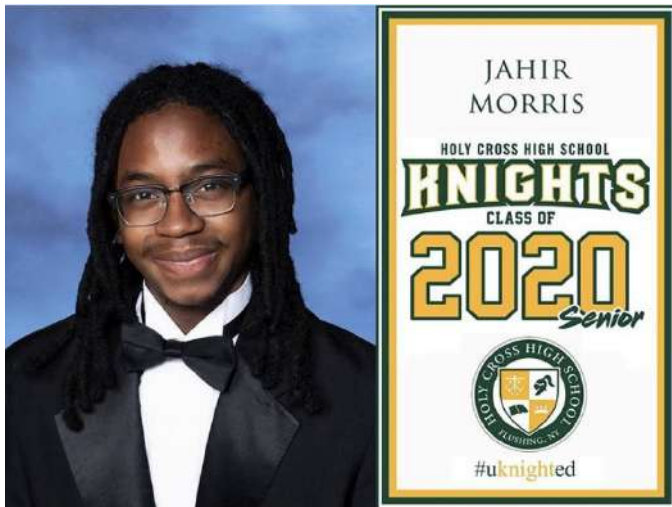




The Lance



OUR 2020 VALEDICTORIAN SPEECH JAHIR MORRIS



I want to start by saying congratulations to the entire graduating class of 2020. I'm sure you've heard it said many times by your family and friends, but it's important that you yourself acknowledge what a great accomplishment this is. And with that said, I'd like to begin.

When I was told I had to write a speech for graduation, honestly, I didn't feel like it. I wasn't sure what I would write and I didn't know if I could do it in time. You'd be right if you said quarantine has made me lazy, but I like to think we were all waiting for the day when we could put down the chromebook and really start our vacation. But five days and a few sleepless nights later and here I am. Standing before you, giving a speech that may very well be the last thing you'll hear me say. Sad though it may be, there's a reason why they call these moments bitter sweet.

Every single one of us is about to take a monumental leap into a world that, until now, was distant and unknown. Now we find ourselves standing at the edge of a cliff, wondering if we'll survive the fall or be crushed by the weight of our fears. But I can assure you, the challenges you've overcome over the past four years have

more than prepared you to make the jump clear across the chasm, and onto the path of success that lies ahead. Think less of this moment as a final goodbye to the life with which you've grown accustomed, and more as a welcome party to the men you've always hoped you'd become.

Now I could take this time to reminisce with you about the fun memories we've made over our time together, but that's what yearbooks are for. Instead, I want to share something that hopefully you'll keep in mind as you face the challenges that lie ahead. When I was younger, my parents and teachers always asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. My response was anything from being a chef to becoming a superhero, and I was so confident in my answers. I never would've guessed I would be graduating from high school to learn why plants grow. It would be an understatement to say I've changed a lot since then, we all have. But regardless of those changes, that self-assured little boy is still present within us all. It's that confidence and sense of self that will continue to strengthen us as we inevitably face moments that

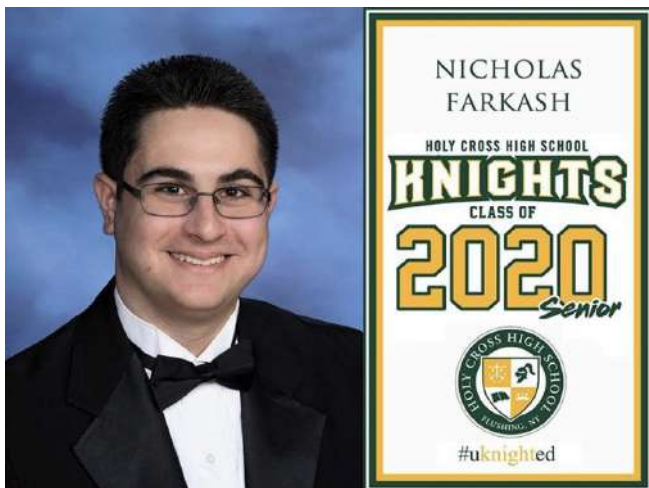


make us feel powerless and ordinary. We've grown so much through the community fostered by Holy Cross, but now is your chance to grab hold of your independence and use it to become the individual that only you know you can be. I decided that I want to close this out with something a little less conventional. Besides, I'm sure most of you are tired of being congratulated over and over again. So for your sake and mine, I want to issue you a challenge. The world we live in is constantly changing; almost as fast and as drastically as ourselves. And each day



that passes, I become increasingly aware how much the world needs people who are capable, devoted, objective, and resolute. So I challenge you, wherever it is you choose to venture, to take the initiative. I challenge you to further your education. I challenge you to set higher standards for yourself, and for those around you. There isn't a doubt in my mind that every single one of you graduating in the Holy Cross class of 2020 can complete this challenge; I just hope you'll accept it.

OUR 2020 SALUTATORIAN SPEECH NICHOLAS FARKASH



When we said we never wanted to see Cross again, this wasn't what we meant. When we were worried that our Senior Trip and Prom would be canceled, we didn't expect it to be like this. When we thought we would have fun in our last year, we didn't think we would see each other for the last time in March.

Nothing about this year could have been expected. Since the beginning of the decade, the world has been in disorder. We thought that we would be able to spend our last months of senior year together in school, having fun before we went off to college. Instead, we've had to spend our last months isolated in our homes, distanced from our friends and peers. It almost feels like these four years were pointless because the end result was taken from us. We spent all this time working hard, and our efforts were rewarded with punishment. Our determination and hope were met with disappointment.

While this has been an extremely unfortunate start to our adult lives, we must move on. We need to put this all in the past and forget it. Nothing good can come from dwelling in a past that has no good to offer. We are faced with a choice; We can either

run away from our past, or we can learn from it. Running away implies fear, and fear makes us weaker. Learning from it, on the other hand, makes us stronger. We must take our knowledge of the past and apply it to the future so we can avoid past mistakes. However, we must be selective about what information we apply. We cannot focus on every minor detail and footnote that exists. To do so would be pedantic and result in nothing but wasted time. Instead, we must only focus on that which can offer us important information. If there is nothing useful to learn, we must leave it behind.

There are two sayings that I follow every day. The first is this; "Forget about the past when there's nothing to gain". If there's nothing good you can take out of a past experience, put it behind you and forget it. Living in the past does nothing but prevent progress. Revisiting the past, on the other hand, will allow us to extract the important information without concerning ourselves with the insignificant things. This leads to the second saying, which is "If you can't control it, why worry?" There's no point in worrying about something that's out of your control.



If you can't do anything to make a situation better, then the only thing you can do is make it worse. Instead, sit back and accept whatever is about to happen. There's nothing that can be done about it, so just let it happen and take it in stride. By following these two sayings, I believe that everyone can take something from their past and apply it to their future.



If there IS one thing everyone should take away from their past, it's this; We have already accomplished so much, and we are just getting started. The students in our class will go on to do incredible things, each in their own unique way. But all will go on to leave a lasting impression on the world. While we cannot be certain of when this will end, we can be certain that we will go on to do incredible things and influence the world for the better. We've spent our lives enduring everything thrown at us. We were born in a time of fear, we are graduating in a time of pandemic, and we will live in a time of uncertainty. Now is surely the time to display what we are truly capable of. Thank you.

OUR 2020 KNIGHT OF YEAR SPEECH

JAEDEN SMITH



Good Morning, Mr. Truesdell, Mr. Burns, Faculty and Students. I hope you and your families are doing well during these unprecedented times.

Going into Holy Cross High School, I didn't know what to expect out of my progression in getting better grades and performing more efficiently in the athletic field. Not only was the school in a different borough, but it was all boys, had more advanced classes, and the competition for each sport the school provided was more combative. I also didn't know that many people within the school community, aside from former Holy cross students as well as the football and track coaches, I lacked any real connection and trust with anybody, including my classmates and teammates, during freshman year. At the time, my main goal was to make a name for myself because I felt like I didn't make much of a big impact in my middle school community. I didn't want to repeat past mistakes and regretful decisions that I've made in those days for the next couple of years attending Holy Cross.

However, It never occurred to me how difficult achieving this feat was going to be; particularly when each day of the week I was tasked with a persistent amount of homework and had football or track practice afterschool. Having a tight schedule stuck with me after freshman year and it gave me a sense of responsibility towards my family, my school

community, and myself. Doing numerous service hours only cemented this sense of importance, especially when it involved helping others who had no control over the conditions they were born into and had no choice but to adapt through trial and error. By this point, my main goal had changed and it was more oriented towards balancing out whatever responsibility was granted to me and it was my role to put forth the effort into whatever I was assigned in order for me to succeed and possibly help others in the process, whether it involved sports, school, service, or anything beyond that. As Frederick Douglass once said "If there is no struggle, there is no progress".

With each test I studied for, each football game or track meet I participated in, and each service trip I've went on I had slowly been striving to fulfill my original goal the whole time. With all my accomplishments, I started to notice how somewhat selfish it was, even though I wanted to be respected and not underestimated I didn't think about what path it would lead me down if I were to become egotistical and self centered. Holy Cross introduced a different path for me, a path that included empathy towards other, wise decision making in the hardest of times, and sacrifice of personal desires.

A path that showed me that I don't have to be the smartest, the most athletic, or the most popular on social media to succeed in life; this kind of path is represented by the four pillars that the school has stood for (Faith, Wisdom, Service, and Community).



The key pillar that stood out to me in this case was faith, without it there's no drive to go above and beyond or encourage others to hold onto what little hope they have in themselves or in others. I thank God for the life that he has given me and pray that he blesses me with a good college life and a successful career after leaving Holy Cross. I'd also like to thank the many teachers that have taught me, the teammates and classmates that have stood by me, the coaches who have challenged me, and my family for supporting me for so long; I pray that God blesses all of you as well.



Despite the circumstances that the world is overcome with today and the grief that it has to endure yet again, I encourage everyone, not just in my life but outside of it, to keep your faith strong. These are definitely some frightening times that are upon us; in terms of the safety of our health and the safety of one's life due to the threat of bigotry and the practice of it on innocent people just because of the color of their skin. Not only do I pray that this virus comes to pass but so does the injustice that is faced almost everyday by people who don't deserve it. But, this is just another obstacle that God has given the world to challenge it's faith in him (to quote a song lyric), "cause after the tears, come the cheers."