

WHY NORTHRIDGE PREP?

Andrew McDonough



The following is a transcription of a speech given by Andrew McDonough ('09) at the Visions in Education benefit dinner on March 2, 2009.

Thank you, Mr. Joniak.

I also want to thank Mr. Meyer for letting me say a few words here tonight.

Finally, I want to thank all of you for your support of Northridge Prep and the Willows Academy at this 2009 Visions and Benefit Dinner. I know you had to give up your Monday evening to be here with us tonight, but your attendance means a great deal to all of us.

As Mr. Joniak mentioned, my name is Andrew McDonough and I am a current senior at Northridge Prep. As some of you know, I have not been at Northridge for my entire high school career, but I feel that due to this fact I can offer a unique perspective about what makes Northridge different, and what makes Northridge great.

Northridge excels in three main areas: academics, student life, and most importantly, the Catholic faith.

Now it goes without saying that Northridge offers a strong academic curriculum. I have been the victim of many a late night studying, and many times I have walked out of the classroom with my head spinning after a test. However, what really sets Northridge academics apart is the devoted and committed faculty. For example, Dr. Shepherd, my senior English teacher and guidance counselor, puts in eight-hour days on Saturdays in the fall in order to write a personal letter of recommendation for each and every Northridge senior for his college application. Also, Mr. Kile, my Latin teacher, worked with me after school last year so that I would be prepared to take the AP Latin exam as a junior. I am grateful to both of these men, and also to the entire Northridge faculty for all that they do for us students. Thank you.

Also, not only do I know that the Northridge faculty have very high intelligence levels, but I can rest assured knowing that they are men of the highest and soundest moral character. I cannot emphasize how important it is for a high school boy to have good men as role models in the classroom, for as former American president Theodore Roosevelt warned, "To educate a person in mind but not in morals is to educate a menace to society."

Now there is fun stuff at Northridge too. Northridge has many different clubs and sports and just about every student participates in at least one. As a senior, I have been a member of the flag football team, baseball team, student council, debate team, math team, and was in the play. However, what really sets Northridge apart is the desire that students have to stay at school, after school. For example, some seniors and I play basketball a few times a week in the small gym with a

faculty member after school. Also, twice a week in the morning there are 20-30 students at open gym soccer which starts at 7:30 am. I know it's hard for me to get to school that early. We really have a devoted student body. It really is a brotherhood. Last Friday, our basketball team won its second straight regional championship, and we had an active and inspired student section. When the game was over, we stormed the floor (almost trampling a few players) and all sang the school fight song at center court. Singing that fight song represented an indescribable feeling of brotherhood.

Looking back, I would expect any high school senior to say that he had made lifelong bonds of friendship while in school. However, I feel the friendships that I have made in high school are different, because they are grounded in the Catholic faith. The Catholic faith really is central to Northridge, and Northridge Prep is the only school that I know of which offers daily Mass and confession upon request (because we do have a full time chaplain), and gives students the opportunity to spend at least one period each week in the chapel in personal prayer, reflection, or confession. Looking back, I am grateful that Northridge has developed the habits of personal prayer, confession, and the initiative to attend weekday Mass (although my mother would like me to attend more often), because the Catholic faith is the most important gift which we have. But in order to take full advantage of that gift, we must grow in our faith. I am grateful to Northridge, especially our chaplain, Fr. Rocky, for accelerating that growth process not only in me, but also in my classmates.

In conclusion, having come from another school, I can say that Northridge Prep is a very special place. I feel privileged to have been apart of it, and feel that I have been prepared well for the future by being blessed with the opportunity to grow in character, form lifelong friendships, and learn from some of the best men that I know. It has been frequently quoted that, "Intelligence plus character; that is the goal of real education." Northridge Prep both expresses and lives out that quote each and every day. For that, I am proud to be a Northridge Knight.

Again, I want to thank you for supporting Northridge Prep with your attendance tonight. I want to wish you a very fine rest of the evening. Thank you.