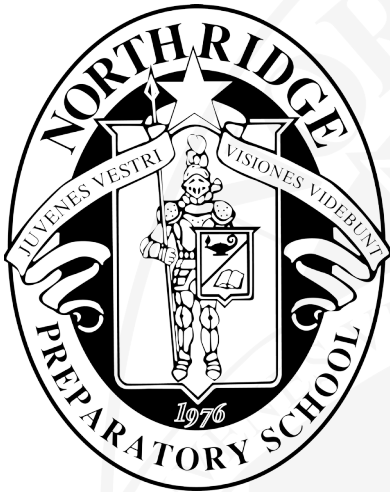




Dr. Warren Diem's Keynote Address at Commencement 2011



Northridge Graduates of 2011...everyone here looks upon you with great pride and joy and extends to you their congratulations at this important event in your lives.

As you marched in this evening, you passed a shield with the Latin words, "*juvenes vestri visiones videbunt.*" Though you have walked past it many times, perhaps you never really looked at it carefully enough. The shield and the Latin motto were created and composed 35 years ago by a group of founding parents in the home of Dr. Roy Wauck. The knight symbolizes a crusader in armor ready and prepared to do combat, trained to be victorious in the midst of life's battles. The carefully selected motto is translated, "*your young men shall see visions;*" the verse continues: "*and your old men shall dream dreams*"

The original group of parents and faculty did dream, and they had a vision when setting the foundations of the future college preparatory school. The dream seemed to fall short. It started small, with thirty-three students, four classrooms an office and little more.

The parents and staff defined its mission and dreamed of an educational institution whose ultimate goal was to produce men of global vision—men who could bring about a transformation of the legal structures of nations:

- to protect the lives of the unborn,
 - to create nurturing, united families,
 - to create just laws enabling immigrants a way to enter into the mainstream of society,
 - to create a way to provide equal education for all,
 - to bring about a sense of solidarity giving solutions to the poverty and hunger of third world nations,
 - to rewrite the biology textbooks making it clear that man is distinct from all the other living organisms,
 - to be in positions of power where decisions are made choosing the future court justices.
- The world desperately needs these kinds of men.*

This was the vision when Northridge began. Over the course of the years, the school was moved several times; it met and overcame a multitude of obstacles. Some parents sacrificed many things; some traveled great distances. Some moved their homes to bring their children closer to the school. There were some who, to keep the school afloat, mortgaged their homes. There were lots of difficulties, and yet, the original vision has not changed despite the many vicissitudes and alterations of the past 35 years.

The first headmaster, Dr. James Stenson, placed emphasis on the importance of studying history and of reading great biographies because it leads to a deeper understanding of civilization and culture. He was, and is, still firmly convinced that young people are deeply motivated by studying men of great vision. It is a wonderful experience to meet great men in well-written biographies. It is an even greater and off the charts experience to meet them in person.

I have been privileged to come in contact with two persons who have influenced my life very significantly.

Msgr. Josemaría Escrivá, whom I first met in 1958. I can still see his face in my mind's eye. I can see the exact location, the exact moment, the exact time of day when I first met him. He won my head and my heart. He was a father to me. He taught that the ordinary events of every day life are the means and path to personal sanctity.

The second was John Paul II whom I saw for the first time along with the Northridge faculty and students in Grant Park and other events during the course of his stay in Chicago in October 1979. He drew enormous crowds, but it was the young people who were drawn and flocked to him. They sensed he knew them, he understood them, and he loved them. It was something extraordinary to see.

Both Msgr. Escriva and John Paul II influenced millions of persons across the globe. Their writings are sold in a multitude of languages. Their vision and their life's training enabled them to impact the culture, civilization, and lives of millions.

Guys, when they were the same age as you are now, they faced a war torn century where the numbers of atrocities and death far exceeded anything the world had ever known. Theirs was a century filled with ideological movements that created and sustained revolutions, wars, and international conflicts where more than 100 million human beings died. Yet they were able to rise above all these difficulties and move multitudes to work towards the creation of a civilization of life and love.

It is interesting to look at them as they were at your age.

Karol Wojtyla at 18, like you, was about to enter the university. He was a serious student, wanted to study Polish literature and culture, loved languages, loved drama and was very good at acting.

At a similar age, Josemaría was also a serious student, loved architecture, and studied law because his father wanted him to. But, he was acutely aware that he was being called to something he couldn't quite see, despite making every effort to discover the plan for his life.

The future was only partially, if at all, clear to each of them. It was as clear to them as it is to you at this present moment. They had very similar aspirations and goals in their lives to yours. It was at this stage of their lives that events around them began to mold them into the men they became.

Neither Karol Wojtyla nor Josemaría knew of the wars and difficulties they were to face, yet by facing the ordinary events each day, one day at a time, they were able to become persons of great influence and stature.

Graduates! You are not yet the person you are meant to be. *You are becoming!* You are a being in the making! You are becoming aware that the *I* of today is giving way to the *me* of tomorrow.

The central message of both Karol Wojtyla and Josemaría is that each human being is an absolutely unique person. Each person is shaped and formed in the course of the events taking place in history.

Convince yourself: immersed in the currents and streams of time, *either I shape them or they shape me*. I must live with the realization that my time is limited. I don't know how much I have. I must use it well—every moment is important. The past is behind; I cannot change it, though I can learn from it. The future is yet to come, and to some extent, still lies in my hands. What really counts is to use now well.

Graduates of 2011, you have been placed here at the beginning of the 3rd millennium for a reason. *Discover that reason.*

The following paraphrase John Paul II addressing the youth of the world.

Your task, the task of your generation is to reaffirm the true transcendence of man, who, by nature surpasses the world of mere things. Man is not something, but someone...a being related to others. He is not an island unto himself. He is not alone in the universe. He needs others, and is needed by them. He is more than a random speck of atomic matter that has evolved into a higher form of consciousness. He is not just a jumble of feelings and sensations to be placated at their every beck and call. By his power to know himself in the very depths of his being, man rises above the whole universe of mere objects. Looking into the inner recesses of his being, he discovers God probing his heart. This is where he becomes master commander of his own being.

*He decides his own destiny in the sight of God and recognizes in himself a spiritual immortal soul. And, discovers he transcends **time**, and with God's help guides it towards eternity.*

This vision of the dignity and transcendence of man has to be brought into every dimension of modern culture: mass-media and communications; the fields of biology and medicine; business and marketing; graphic design, music and the arts; the political arena; the judicial, legislative and executive branches of state and federal government; the whole gamma of man's efforts to service his fellow man.

*It is part of your task to bring this about, to know and help others to understand what it is to be a human person, a child of God, a man in the modern world who really knows *who* he is, *why* he is and *where* he is going.*

Pass on this vision to the future, so that some day your children's children, having also passed through the halls of Northridge, will be men of great vision—noble knights of Northridge trying to put into their lives what you so nonchalantly walked past:

“Juvenes vestri visiones videbunt”

The real visionaries, the hidden heroes of your lives, are sitting behind you and at your sides: your parents, your teachers; be very grateful to them for all they have done for you and given to you! Their dreams have you as the center. Be faithful to them and fulfill their dreams.

Once again, congratulations! Good luck and God Speed!



Dr. Warren Diem is a 35-year veteran teacher at Northridge Preparatory School in Niles, Illinois. A founding member of the faculty, he has taught nearly every Northridge alumnus. At the conclusion of the 2010-2011 school year, Dr. Diem will retire. It is with great honor and respect that the Northridge Class of 2011 has asked him to be the keynote speaker at Commencement 2011.