

**Shattuck-St. Mary's**  
**Opening Chapel Speeches 2017-18**

**Senior Class President Tony Huerta-Apanco**

My name is Tony Huerta-Apanco and I am from Albert Lea, Minn. A quick fact about Albert Lea is that it is one of, if not, the best places in Minnesota and if you hear Mrs. Moyer say it's the "armpit" of Minnesota, she is just jealous she's not from there.

Change. That was the word that came to mind when I thought about this upcoming school year. As many of you may know, for the past four years I have been a part of the soccer Center of Excellence. However, this year, things changed. This summer I made the hard decision to no longer take part in the program. Even though my physical health no longer allowed for this, I still grew nervous in the weeks following my decision because there was something in the back of my mind telling me that I was only a soccer player and nothing else.

I want to tell each and everyone one of you something. I realized that there is so much more I have to offer and it is important to understand that certain labels do not define who we are as individuals. Sure, some of us have set Centers of Excellence that illustrate our hard work and effort, but do not let it control what you see. There is so much each individual has to bring to the table and I want you all, this year, to break down barriers, go outside your comfort zone, and interact with people who may not have anything in common with you or do something that you may find some interest in. We have something special here at SSM and that is the amount of diversity the school holds. Take advantage of it. You will be surprised how amazing it is to hear someone else's story. It will educate or give you a further understanding on certain topics but you will also learn the importance of open mindedness.

I want you all to jump into this school year without hesitation because, believe me, you will enjoy this place so much more if you do. Although there are multiple hockey and soccer games, make sure you catch at least one of the school's performing arts shows (I would highly recommend a band concert), stop in and listen to the really smart BioScience, Major, Engineering and Honors Program kids who are working long and hard on their projects, and make sure you do one of Emma Yan's perfume modules - she would be delighted to have you. Embrace the time that you have here on campus with friends and teachers, especially you seniors. It's our last year of high school, so make memories, appreciate your friends, and thank your teachers because they have done so much for you.

Be the best person possible because you never know who's watching or looking up to you. I want to make sure that we lead by example and represent what our Shattuck community means. I'll leave you all with a quote that you'll find here on campus that says, "Be the change you wish to see in the world." Make a difference and leave your mark on this school. I am excited to get to interact with all of you! Returning students, faculty and staff, welcome home. New students, faculty and staff, welcome to our family.

### **World Languages Instructor Leita Gjersvig**

Good afternoon, Welcome students, parents, families, faculty and staff to our 2017-2018 school year. My name is Leita Gjersvig, I am originally from Costa Rica. I live in Mankato, Minn. with my husband and drive almost 100 miles every day to arrive at this beautiful campus. We have two boys that have finished university and live in Minneapolis and Denver. Here at SSM, I teach Spanish. This will be my eleventh year teaching at Shattuck-St. Mary's. I am also an advisor and one of the coordinators for prom.

When people ask me why I spend two hours a day on the road to commute here, I tell them Shattuck is a really special school that deserves our passion. I believe that you the students and families along with my colleagues is what it makes our school different from other schools. Here, at Shattuck I love seeing you learn by taking advantage of the choices and opportunities while exploring this unique learning environment around us.

I am looking forward to getting to know the new students, new faculty, and staff. I am also looking forward to reconnecting with the returning members of our community. I always enjoy cooking tasty Latin dishes as much as I love teaching Spanish, so you can expect a chance to taste delicious Costa Rican cooking during the year.

I came to the U.S. to join my Minnesota-born husband here and I had never experienced snow, cold, and was still learning English. It wasn't always an easy adjustment. My advice to you is to not be afraid to approach me or others here if you are having some homesickness, difficulty adjusting or anything else. We want to do all we can to help you feel comfortable and reach your goals at SSM.

### **Merton's Prayer "The Road Ahead," as read by Director of Middle School Heather Morehead and Director of Upper School Patrick Schaefer**

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so.

But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this, you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it. Therefore I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

Amen.

**Boys U15 DA Head Coach Angel Rivillo**

My name is Angel Rivillo and this is my third year here at SSM. I am currently the head coach for the Under 15 Boys Developmental Academy team. I am especially pleased to be a part of SSM because I get to coach the sport that I love and mentor students that are in a very similar situation to my own growing up. I am from Caracas, Venezuela and at the age of 15, I came to the USA for an opportunity to learn English, play soccer, and potentially go to college. You see, in South America, you cannot simultaneously play sports while trying to obtain a college education. Since my parents were big on education they told me that I could continue to play soccer as long as I obtain a college degree, after that I could do whatever I pleased.

So at the age of 15, I came to the U.S. with a host family from Dallas that was able to host me and another teammate of mine from Venezuela. They were my parents away from home. I met some wonderful people along the way, including my wife, only four months after arriving in the U.S. I taught my American brother how to clean and cook, and he taught me English along with other great things. When I came, I did not know the language, there were no smart phones, so no Facetime or Whatsapp, and there was no Internet. I could only call my family once per month and it was a collect call, so you can imagine how hard it was back then.

But I did not worry about that when I came, I wanted to better myself. My country was limited in the ability to provide better ways for me to grow as a soccer player and a person in general. A lot of you are here for some of the same reasons. You want more for yourself, you want to accomplish more, you want to be challenged more and you are willing to leave the comfort of your home to come to a place like this.

Know that taking the first step to come here takes courage and courage is a wonderful thing. Not everyone has courage, so continue to embrace it and feed it! Courage allows you to take a chance and dream big. Courage is what moves masses and inspires people to do great things. I am proud of all you for having the courage to come here and make yourself vulnerable to the unknown. Believe me, it's worth it. It is likely to be one of the best decisions you will have ever made in your life.

This is your new home away from home. Teachers, coaches, dorm parents, advisors will all be your new adoptive parents. You will have new brothers from China, Sweden, New Jersey, Brazil, and Venezuela. Learn from your new brothers and sisters. Respect your new parents and enjoy the journey that lies ahead. But more importantly, never forget where you came from and what makes you who you are. Don't lose your identity, which is what makes you 'you' and what will make this place that much more special. Call your parents daily, for the first week and then maybe once a week. Make an effort to be "here," to become involved, and to add your flare.

When you go back home, you will be surprised at how much you will miss your new home and the new brothers and sisters you left behind. You will find that you can't wait to be here again. You will meet great people here, perhaps some that will be a part of you for the

rest of your life. You have taken the first step, great things are coming your way, enjoy them and welcome to Shattuck-St. Mary's!