

# **‘Sisters’: Seton Keough students say farewell**

Jennifer Casey, a member of the Class of 1999 of The Seton Keough High School and English teacher at the all-girls institution, said that the school’s closing is “as painful as losing a living person.”

“I think when you walk through the doors of Seton Keough, you buy into something very special, and you carry that with you,” Casey said following the school’s June 1 closing Mass.

Nevertheless, she added, “We can carry home with us, but the fact that we can’t come home is devastating.”

Students, faculty and staff expressed sadness over the school’s closing, 28 years after the merger of Archbishop Keough and Seton high schools, but hope as well.

Reading an original poem before the Mass, junior Victoria Amah described her “sisters,” including “sisters who can dance up a storm,” and “sisters who make me laugh so hard I shake the earth.”

Though she didn’t choose her family, she thanked God, “so great and so wise,” for giving her “sisters.”

The Mass brought together freshman, sophomores and juniors, as seniors graduated May 26.

Monsignor James O. McGovern, who retired as pastor from Church of the Resurrection in Ellicott City in 2009 and has served as canonical representative on the Seton Keough school board, celebrated the Mass.

“Life is full of letting go,” he told the young women, noting that the disciples had to do so at the Ascension, though Jesus assured them he would always be with them.

“And so I think it is with each of you as you go forth from this institution,” Monsignor McGovern said.

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, he continued, “had the same letting go in her life,” leaving Baltimore for Emmitsburg and even mourning the loss of two daughters, “and yet, she still had God, who was with her on her journey.”

“Take with each of you the wonderful gifts to the various schools you’ll be attending next year ... realizing that God is with us,” the monsignor told the young women.

Ryann Cooper, a Randallstown resident, will spend her senior year at the Institute of Notre Dame in Baltimore. She said her years at Seton Keough “helped me find myself as a person and come out of my shell.”

Avidly involved with the theater, music and the Project Lead the Way Biomedical Science program, she said she was “devastated” by the school’s closing, but plans to stay in touch “not just with my class but with members of the other classes and teachers.”

Jessica Harzer, also a rising senior, will go on to St. Vincent Pallotti High School, a school of the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C., in her hometown of Laurel.

“The friendships I have made here will be forever friendships,” she said, adding that she will always be grateful for “the fact that I had so many opportunities here to grow as an artist, a leader and a person, that I could not have gotten and will not get anywhere else.”

Principal Donna Bridickas choked up as she addressed the young women after Mass, urging them to thank their teachers.

“Girls, they could have left and gotten other jobs very easily,” she said, also calling them “the most dedicated men and women” before applause drowned out further descriptors.

“Sometimes they called you to do things you really didn’t want to do, but they called you to be better young women, and you really need to thank them,” Bridickas said.

“Know that you are truly loved by God, and you are truly loved by all of us at Seton Keough,” she added.

The students sang the school's alma mater, loudly, for the final time.

*See photos from Seton Keough's last graduation here.*