

Unique customs accentuate end of school days

Many Catholic schools in the archdiocese renewed senior traditions during graduation season. A sampling follows.

Pool jump

The 168 seniors at Notre Dame Preparatory School in Towson wore gym uniforms and pink and yellow t-shirts signifying their class colors May 21. They joined hands and formed a ring around the Blazers' indoor pool. A countdown led to a collective jump as the rest of the student body cheered from bleachers.

"I've been waiting to do this for seven years," said Leigh Fineran of a rite of passage at least three decades old.

The jump is preceded by a senior liturgy, with its own customs. Graduates receive baskets of letters from classmates, say goodbye to their "little sisters" and sing songs before they rush to the pool, angling for the best spot.

"It's really symbolic of leaving, when you jump in the pool," Hannah Mardiney said in Groeninger Courtyard, where seniors dried off and took photos.

Walkway

From pre-K-2 through 11th grade, students of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Essex created a walkway as seniors processed into church for a Baccalaureate Mass May 30.

"That was me not that long ago," said Michael Lyons, who began at OLMC as a kindergartener.

Smiles, cheering and homemade signs accompanied those leaving one of the two pre-K-12 schools in the archdiocese sponsored by a parish.

"It connects seniors to their foundations," said fifth-grade teacher Kelly Medvigy,

who taught many in the class of 2018 when they were first-graders.

“It shows that we’re a family,” said Christine Olszewski, principal of the lower school. “We had 2-year-olds all the way up out here.”

Cate Trockenbrot, a rising freshman, likes seeing “everybody grow as the years go by.” She will be in the procession in four years, when the walkway will include her sister, Lizzy. When Lizzy and the class of 2025 process, Cate plans to be there.

The Tower

As their time at Mount St. Joseph High School dwindles, seniors explore a spot on campus heretofore reserved for alumni. They climb an old stairwell in the “Tower,” sign their names on an interior wall, and take in the view from 75 feet above ground.

“Seeing new graduates sign their names is a reminder of the brotherhood they are joining,” said Joseph Schuberth, director of communications and marketing, but more pertinent, a member of the class of 2000. “They step out into the world with a support network 16,000 alumni strong.”

The Tower served as a staircase for a building, since torn down, where Xaverian Brothers resided on the top floor in the early 1900s. For decades the tower was off limits to students, some of whom sneaked up to sign their names anyway. The 1990s brought the tradition of graduating classes climbing the Tower to leave their names.