

*These words were delivered by Lex at the Alumni Service of Remembrance in the Chapel of St. Peter and St. Paul on May 30, 2015. The sermon was followed by a rousing rendition of "O Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem"*

On a bright and brisk October Sunday morning some 45 years ago now, the seventh Rector of the School awoke to behold a decidedly biblical vision. The turbulence of the '60s had brought unprecedented divisions and challenges to the school community, and a good deal of the frustration arising out of that turbulence had been focused on the institution of chapel. So it was with surprise and delight, as he later reported, that when Matthew Warren peered out the rectory window that morning, he saw that overnight a sculpture had appeared on the chapel lawn. And not just any sculpture. No, this magnificent work of art was 16 feet high, 54 feet long, 3 feet wide. L-O-V-E the sculpture boldly proclaimed. LOVE.

Now, it just happened to be Dance Weekend and so, one might say, LOVE was already in the air. And while that might have been true, there was also something deeper at work. As the student creators of this masterpiece were quick to point out, LOVE in this context was a verb not a noun. And an imperative one at that. The sculpture was referencing *agape*, New Testament Greek for love as an act of will. Love that is self-giving and unconditional. Love that works for the benefit of the other. *Non nobis. Sed allis*. The kind of love that Jesus of Nazareth taught and lived. The kind of love that the Apostle Paul commended to the little community of believers in Corinth: love that is patient, love that is kind, love that perseveres, love that is never resentful or arrogant, love that is filled with hope, love that endures to the end of the age. Paul described this love as "the still more excellent way." This *agape* was the love that would heal and bind together a hurting community and motivate an ethic of love and service to the world. That was certainly what had happened in Corinth.

And so in the midst of another time of turbulence and conflict, Mr. Warren's heart was gladdened by the appearance of LOVE on the chapel lawn. It was a sign of hope and healing. The community was drawn to the sculpture that morning. Fr. Dick Aiken, who was then Dean of the Chapel, celebrated an *agape* service around the sculpture, accompanied by guitars and with students and their weekend guests singing and dancing and generally filled with joy. As the students shared the bread and wine of the *agape* meal, a shift of spirit was in the air, a spirit that continued on through the rest of that year, and a spirit that has lived on in the Form of 1970 for these 45 years since.

In corresponding with an alumnus who was unhappy with the pictures he had seen of the sculpture and the *agape* celebration, Mr. Warren replied, "How easily shocked you

are. Love may be a four-letter word, but it has a good scriptural background.” Indeed it does.

On the night before his crucifixion, Jesus said to his friends, “This is my commandment. That you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” [John 15:12-13] That is *agape*. Self-giving, sacrificial, unconditional love. Love that gives and expects nothing in return. *Non nobis. Sed allis.*

In fact, I would go so far as to suggest that *agape* is the foundation upon which St. Paul’s School has been built. *Agape* was certainly the foundation upon which our patron, the Apostle Paul, imagined his communities were being built. Paul uses the image of the Body of Christ to suggest the multiplicity, the diversity, the radical inclusivity of a community gathered in *agape*. The Body needs all its constituent parts to be a whole, and no one part of the Body is more important than another. And all these parts are knit together by *agape*, “the still more excellent way.” So it is with this community gathered here. The multiplicity, the diversity, and one hopes, the radical inclusivity, of the Body knit together by *agape* right here in Millville. And the *agape* community here has equipped us all for service. Our twelfth Rector, Bill Matthews, put it this way. “At the heart of a St. Paul’s School education, learning in community aims towards a purpose higher than personal gain.” *Non nobis. Sed allis.* Which happens to be the motto of The Missionary Society, the school’s most venerable and ancient organization.

Now, as we gather here in this chapel on this day, in this sacred space on these sacred grounds, there is another Greek word we might consider: *Anamnesis*. Meaning “remembrance.” A memorial sacrifice. *Anamnesis* is the part of our Eucharistic liturgies where members of the worshiping community recall past events in their tradition of faith that have formed their self-identity and self-understanding. In a few minutes, we will engage in another act of *anamnesis*. The necrology will be read. Particular names will be familiar to particular ones of us. Other names will not. But, like the names in the Wisdom of Sirach that we read a moment ago, whether the names are recognized or unfamiliar, they will be remembered by us on this day and by God into eternity. These names now belong to that mighty cloud of witnesses, the communion of saints, another beautiful image of a community gathered and knit together by *agape*, knit together by love. We might close our eyes as these names are read, and offer thanks to God for each life. And we might also remember the shortness of this life, knowing that one day, either soon or late, our own names will be read in this chapel on a day much like today.

This chapel holds a beautiful symbol of this *anamnesis* for those we love but see no longer. I hope we will each have a chance to visit it, if perhaps only for a moment,

sometime this weekend. The sculpture, “Death and Youth” by Daniel Chester French that lives in the chantry just off the ante-chapel was dedicated in 1929 to remember the boys of this school—and that’s what they were, just boys—who sacrificed their lives for country and comrades in the Great War of 1914. The sculpture is so evocative of *agape*, of self-giving, sacrificial love, of laying down one’s life for one’s friends. It is so fitting that this sculpture, a call to *anamnesis*, to sacred remembering, should be here in this chapel. Stop by, if you can.

All right now. Let’s fast forward from that lovely October Sunday morning 45 years ago to 7:00 am this morning. Same location. This chapel lawn. At least 40 or so of the same people who gathered that long-ago day, back in their same places this morning, albeit in slightly used condition. The 45<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Form gathered again for another *agape* celebration. It was certainly a festive time. And it was a time of thanksgiving and remembrance. A time of *agape* and *anamnesis*. I’m going to be bold enough to say that we celebrated and remembered and gave thanks not only for our own lives and times at this School and beyond, but also for the lives and times of each of you, alumnae and alumni, who have made the journey here to the Great North Woods this weekend. Because we have all been shaped and formed for life and for service by this School. We have experienced profound friendships and perhaps have learned resilience and patience and mercy and hope in times of trouble and conflict.

And so on this day let’s remember and give thanks for Shattuck and for Coit. For Drury and for Warren. For Oates and for Matthews and for Hirschfeld. For all the women and men who have been our teachers, mentors, and guides. And for each other, for the love of friends, both seen and unseen. *Philia* is the word for that in New Testament Greek. And finally, let us give thanks to God, Holy One, Adonai, for all the blessings of *agape* and *philia* in our lives and for the particular blessing that is St. Paul’s School.

Amen.