

ON HAPPINESS

Good morning, friends.
To the faculty, to the parents, and most of all, to you, the students of this remarkable institution on this joyous day –WOW!

What you have accomplished, what you are accomplishing and what you give promise of accomplishing in the years ahead are wonderful!

All those whose hopes and prayers, whose devotion of time, effort and concern have led to today can take pride in a job well done.

In the Bible, when God contemplates creation he doesn't say he found it "fabulous." He says he found it "good."

In the same sense, the Mott Hall enterprise is "good!"

As a sign of how the rest of the world is beginning to understand what is happening here on 131st Street and Convent Avenue, I am happy to present to the Mott Hall School on behalf of United States Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan his gift of an American flag that has flown over the Capitol in Washington, DC.

While this gift is in specific recognition of the achievement of Mott Hall's nationally acclaimed chess team, Senator Moynihan, an admirer of all that Mott Hall stands for, hopes that this national emblem will serve as a continuing reminder of the best of the American experience.

More than any other nation in history, our country has encouraged and cheered the growth of the individual; it has praised the per-

son who overcomes handicaps and a modest beginning; it has lavished rewards on those whose determination, persistence and will-to-succeed overcome all obstacles. But more than success, we wish you happiness, as in “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

The wisest people in all ages and societies understood the difference between happiness and pleasure. They knew you can say, “Tomorrow afternoon, I am going to have fun,” but you cannot say “Tomorrow afternoon, I am going to be happy.”

For happiness is a by-product that comes, not from an activity you engage in, but from the life you lead. Happiness reflects values, attitudes, and the sense of being at peace with oneself.

Material things can relieve pain and bring immediate pleasure, but they have little relationship to happiness. The rock star who said sadly that “There must be more to life than having everything” hit upon a profound truth.

Happiness flows from producing more than you consume, from seeing the shine in the eyes of those you have helped, from expending your energies in a struggle, whether won or lost, that you know was worth the effort.

The happiest people have family and friends; they belong to a community; they have more than jobs, they have careers; they identify with causes bigger than themselves; and, most important, their lives have meaning and purpose.

We wish you full, productive and satisfying lives in which you achieve the potential you have already revealed, lives which will be a source of joy to all who love you and who watch as you grow to your full height.

Let me add a final wish for your parents.

I love the story of the artist Bernini, who presented his genius son and the boy’s drawings to Pope Paul V; the Pope looked at the boy’s work and said to the father, “You had better watch out or your son will outstrip you.”

The proud father replied, “Sire, that is a competition in which he who loses, wins!”

As a parent speaking to fellow parents, I pray that we each find ourselves in such a competition, in which by losing, we win.

To the graduates, I say, “May the future shine bright for you fine young people of whom we are so proud!

The larger world you will soon enter has good people and bad. The bad will try to corrupt you, tempt you, thwart you.

The good can serve as role models and encourage the best in you to flower.

I wish you the wisdom and strength to choose your friends and models wisely.

Good luck and God bless you!

*Mott Hall Public School
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