



ABBOT'S LETTER | *Abbot Melvin J. Valvano O.S.B. '56*

DEAR FRIENDS,

This year my own class of 1956 celebrated its 50th reunion of graduation from St. Benedict's. And we did indeed celebrate. A wonderfully hard-working committee of devoted classmates organized a fine series of activities to gather a great number of us back at what we know as the "beehive."

But most of all, it was illuminating for me to see our current St. Benedict's through their eyes. We who are here day to day, blessed with this virtue of stability, can so easily take for granted how our school has changed through so many cycles of the past decades. Many were amazed to see for themselves, a number for the first time, the dramatic physical changes in the school and in the neighborhood they encountered so many years ago. In their eyes, we seem to have prospered so magnificently, with a new gym and library, even a residence. They marveled at how the work of our school has progressed in so many ways that many had only heard about or read about.

Those of us here each day know that some of the most devoted men from this class are great examples of how we are able to still be here working with students in an on-going miracle of community. A good and growing number have understood for a long time that what St. Benedict's gave to them was worthy of being passed on to more youngsters for more years. Out of a mix of gratitude, loyalty, family devotion, and altruism, men from this class and many, many others, have seen to it that our school could rebuild and have a chance to serve and thrive anew. Through their own efforts and gifts, by spreading the word and expanding our world of helpers, they exemplify what has allowed the work of our school to continue. We know that it did not need to happen at all.

It's simple but not sufficient at all to hear in my classmates' comments the intended compliments for the work of our school, our sticking with this challenge all these years. I prefer to listen for the underlying sense that comes through all of these remarks, that this is a miracle, that we are doing "the Lord's work."

Those of us here each day know that we would simply not be here at all without extraordinary generosity from so many. We have been blessed to have this wonderful work to do here in a community that needs us and appreciates the good schooling and nurturing that we have been able to offer so many young men. Our students who offer tours and serve as "ministers of hospitality" to our guests, including my own classmates and others gathered for annual reunions, love to "show off" our school and point out different aspects of our facilities and programs. But they, of course, are the best demonstration of what is so valuable about the "success" we have enjoyed, the miracle in which we are blessed to share.

We thank you for enabling these miracles to continue.