



*Thoughts, memories and wisdom
from the Class of 1970,
the first graduates of
Bishop Grimes Jr./Sr. High School,
to the Class of 2020*



To the Bishop Grimes Class of 2020:

In September 1966, I became a member of the first graduating class of Bishop Grimes High School. Along with approximately 349 other 14-year-old kids, I was guided by a team of committed educators, many of whom had never worked together. We would never have upper classmen to serve and guide us. We were always the Senior Class, adding a new class behind us with each progressing year. While struggling to find our own way, we became the example for those who followed us. Guided by the faculty and staff, we grew in body, mind and Spirit for the next four years, graduating in 1970. We also developed a unique bond that keeps us together even now.

The faculty and administration included Sisters of St. Joseph, Marist priests and seminarians, one Brother and several secular teachers. Among many wonderful people, the staff included my dear friend Mr. Ristau, the peaceful custodian who was never too busy to care and share a smile.

During that first year, building construction was incomplete, and the only usable rooms on the 2nd floor were the science labs. No one was permitted on the 2nd floor for any other reason, unless you broke the rules. I recall St. Agnes James catching me running around up there in my gym uniform – of course, I had slipped away from gym class with three friends. She terrified us, threatening that we were headed for the Principal's office. Lucky for us, she burst out laughing as she walked us down the back stairs and sent us back into the gym.

As I recall, boys were required to wear a dress shirt and tie, dress slacks and dress shoes. I believe sports jackets and sweaters were optional. Girls wore a new look for those times – a hound's-tooth box-pleated skirt with a Columbia blue blazer. Navy blue or white sweaters or vests were optional. This was a huge departure from all of the dark-colored uniforms, and I personally loved it! Ludden had opened just three years prior with a dark green skirt and blazer, and The Convent School (the female equivalent of the all-boys CBA) wore navy blue.

Bishop Grimes, Bishop Ludden and Convent were regional parochial schools, as opposed to the smaller parish high schools at Assumption, Sacred Heart, St. John the Baptist, St. John the Evangelist and others, encompassing large areas in Central New York. When Ludden first opened, anyone could apply; but, when Grimes opened, the districts were divided. BG included the north and east sides of Syracuse, and Ludden enrolled the south and west sides. This made life very interesting in my family, as my older sister went to Ludden, my older brother went to CBA and I went to Grimes, while my three younger siblings attended St. Margaret's. I don't recall the exact tuition in 1966, but I believe it was about \$325 a year. I worked at the NYS Fair each year to earn money to help pay my way.

Most of our freshman classes were separated by gender, with only homerooms, the library and the cafeteria providing mixed socialization. That didn't last. During that first year, we named the school mascot (I believe Sr. Inez Marie drew the winning Cobra). We eventually named the yearbook Insight.

1966 through 1970 was a radical time in the United States. The British Invasion brought us the Beatles in 1964 until they broke up in 1970. The Vietnam War was in full rage under President Lyndon Johnson until 1968 when Richard Nixon took over the helm. In 1966, then Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara suggested this was a war we could not win, yet US lives and money continued to pour into the battle-raged country. Nixon later resigned in disgrace in the shadow of Watergate in 1974.

Other landmark events during those four years at BG included the 1967 race riots, the 1969 moon landing and the 1970 Kent State Massacre. All these landmarks in time occurred amid tie-dyed shirts, pop art and Woodstock. All of this happened as I attempted to focus on algebra, earth science and French, not to mention sports, dances and my fumbling attempts at a social life. When I attended BG, Title Nine hadn't been passed, so there were no girls' sports programs other than cheerleading. Girls' basketball began to surface only toward the end of my high school experience. So, I was a cheerleader all four years.

Why Bishop Grimes? Why not the local public school? I think the reasons are much the same today as they were 50 years ago. My parents wanted me to have a quality character-building education in a safe environment. One very significant advantage the Class of 2020 enjoys is diversity. Such a gift to you! Our class included only one person of color and, while I always recall Julia fondly, I can never comprehend how she felt, especially at such a controversial time. You have also been blessed with religious diversity, giving you opportunities to share with people of varied social and spiritual heritages.

Today, the Class of 2020 is released into a world of deep uncertainty. It seems that, in 50 years, we have been unable to heal the racial divide, and coronavirus has changed everything – EVERYTHING. As we attempt to plan our 50th Class Reunion, common sense and fear hold us back. You deserve a grand graduation celebration, yet you're unable to hug one another, and are limited to two carloads of family and friends in an open field.

But what are the life tools that BG has nurtured in the Class of 2020 and the Class of 1970, giving us the power to overcome so much adversity? First and foremost, we choose to believe we are guided by a higher power and we trust we will continue to move forward in truth, love and understanding if we remain strong and follow Spirit's example in the face of life's challenges. Each day of our lives, we will face new opportunities to become better people, better representatives of Spirit's love among us. We'll fail, we'll learn, and we'll move on. We'll need one another to make it all work. And the world will be a better place for our having been here.

I wish you strength, curiosity and tolerance as you begin again. I'm counting on you to make this world a better place. Let Spirit's light of love shine through you always. Smile!

Blessings,

Mary Moriarty Burgess, Class of '70



To the Very Special Class of 2020:

It's been 50 years since the first class graduated. I'm one of those students, and still no smarter than then. But I have managed to survive and managed to do it quite well! I didn't know how special my experience at Grimes was until after I left. So, I hope you will realize it, too.

I pursued a degree in teaching, which had many opportunities at that time. And my more-affordable SUNY degree paid off the same as any private school! Now, I am enjoying life. I have a nice home, a spouse I don't deserve, two beautiful, self-sufficient children and our first granddaughter. (Boy, has she renewed my zest for living!)

As you begin your adult life, my wish for you is to remember our Constitution: you have the right to the PURSUIT of happiness (*not* the same thing as happiness itself!). So, be prepared to pursue. Work hard, be frugal (not cheap), be dependable and be steadfast.

Consider these things that have guided me and worked for me in my life. It's more valuable to be happy than wealthy; it's simpler being truthful than deceitful; it's better to be kind than mean.

Good luck and best wishes, from a member of the first class to you, members of a very special class, also! (Thanks to COVID-19.)

Mike Schmid, Class of '70

PS: I found through our class reunions that we all grew up to be good people. The "cliques" and social "classes" are gone. We are truly ONE!



The Classes of 1970 and 2020 perhaps are more alike than different. The first graduating class is unique in and of itself. It was during the Vietnam War era. The 50th graduating class is also unique, due to the pandemic, which separated, yet strengthened, its members.

When I page through my memories of BG, there are, of course, many which come flooding back. Remembering how hard I worked the first three years of BG, so senior year could be thoroughly enjoyed. Football and basketball games, senior class retreat, senior class trip to a dude ranch, Senior Skip Day to Green Lakes – all of which led up to graduation day.

I know losing three months of school equates to not being able to enjoy those senior activities that you worked hard to enjoy. They say you can make lemonade from the lemons you are handed. Perhaps, looking forward, one of the activities you missed out on can be a theme for a reunion?!

Many of us connect a song with a specific time and/or place. Whenever I hear the song “Let There Be Peace on Earth,” I vividly remember standing in front of BG at our outdoor senior mass and singing it along with my classmates – most of whom had tears in their eyes!

My wish for the Class of 2020 would be that you all are able to stay safe and make our world a better place with the tools you have been given in the past four years at BG.

Kathleen C. (Kirsch) Warguleski, Class of '70

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Dear Graduates of Bishop Grimes Class of 2020:

It’s hard to believe that 50 years ago, the Class of 1970 was the first class to receive our diplomas from Bishop Grimes High School. Today, we congratulate you, the Class of 2020 on your accomplishments.

The Class of '70 grew up with The Beatles and Rolling Stones. We experienced the Summer of '69 and Woodstock. We watched America be the first country to land men on the Moon. The Vietnam War raged, and civil disobedience, racial tensions and protests were front page news. Martin Luther King Jr. and Senator Bobby Kennedy were assassinated. These major events shaped us. Thankfully, we were guided by the values and virtues we learned at Bishop Grimes. BG prepared us for our uncertain world.

So, to you, Class of 2020: you have experienced things in your lives that we could never have imagined! This is your time to step up and take your place in our complex world. While today’s challenges may seem daunting, trust that the education, values and virtues learned at BG have prepared you well. We are proud of you, we believe in you and we expect you to go forth with the confidence – and make this world, our world, your world, a better place.

With Confidence and Respect,

Tom Kane, Class of '70

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Wow! 50 years! It goes by fast, fast, fast! I’ll bet you’ll hear that a lot! Here are my tidbits to share (sorry, I’m an engineer, not a poet):

- Invest immediately! Even a few dollars at a time, compounding works wonderfully over years.
- Then, forget the money and go for your passion. You’ll have a meaningful and enjoyable life and meet some great people along the way. (It took me a while, but I got there eventually.)
- Don’t forget to stop and smell the roses (a saying of my father’s, who appreciated the little – but important – things). In other words, take time for family, friends and yourself. That is what living is all about.
- Don’t be afraid of standing up for your beliefs and your friends. They are more important than how you appear to others.
- And don’t be afraid to make mistakes. Sometimes, it is the only way to move forward and make a difference.

Have a wonderful life!

Pamela Padden Marchand, Class of '70

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Though I took five years of piano lessons from Sr. Jerome Joseph at St. Vincent de Paul grammar school, it wasn’t until joining Glee Club at Bishop Grimes that I got the opportunity to become a vocalist. Between the concerts and musical productions, there were multiple occasions through the years to participate in public performances. This gave me the confidence to pursue more opportunities to sing in public.

Through the ensuing 50 years, I have sung in community productions and played the “nursing home circuit” for a few years. The most gratifying experience, however, has been my many years as a church vocalist,

leading the congregation in regular worship gatherings, singing for weddings and, most importantly, singing for funerals, where music can have a soothing effect on the grief of loved ones.

I thank God for this blessing that He granted me and the days of formation at BG, when I found my voice, which led to a lifelong enjoyment of singing and praising the Lord in song.

Kathleen Coffey Fink, Class of '70

Remember your teachers. They will be with you always in conscious and subconscious ways. Fifty years on, I am joyously lifted in mind and spirit from the advice, friendship, discipline and guidance they provided. A couple of months ago, at the outset of this pandemic, I was overwhelmed emotionally while visiting a wonderful teacher from the 60s.

Bob Jordan, Class of '70

Greetings to the Class of 2020:

It doesn't seem like 50 years ago that my classmates and I graduated from Bishop Grimes. We had the privilege of being the first graduating class from BG! That is our claim to fame, just as you, the Class of 2020, will be the class that had distance learning, a socially distanced graduation and so many other important events cancelled, due to the pandemic. Don't let this quarantine and pandemic put a damper on all your wonderful accomplishments and memories.

I have so many special memories of Bishop Grimes. These are just a few: gender separate classes freshmen year, Brass Buttons Dance, Sr. Agnes Marie and Father St. Onge, Spirit Week football game, Senior Trip to a dude ranch, Art Club, Senior Ball themed "Bridge Over Troubled Waters," Cheerleading and so much more!

After my retirement as the principal of Blessed Sacrament School for 32 years, I had the privilege of returning to BG as a substitute teacher this past fall. It was such a rewarding experience! Don't tell the underclassmen, but I loved subbing for you, the Class of 2020, the best. You all are "good people" who care about one another and about serving the community. You have learned how to know, love and serve God through your Catholic education at BG. This foundation will enable you to thrive in this world and I am so very proud of you. I wish you the best in all your future endeavors.

A very special shout-out to my very own Blessed Sacrament graduates, who I know and especially love: Brianna Bowles, Aaron Brennan, Ian Denton, Nadia Fenu, Michela Marturano, Nico Perez and Rhiannon Riley. (I hope I didn't leave anyone out.)

God Bless You All. Go Cobras!

Andrea Polcaro, Class of '70

Hurray! My very best memory from BG is that we were the first graduating class. Our class started in a brand-new high school. We were the "senior class" from our first day, and it was an adventure every day. Changing classes, meeting the teachers (they were all nuns and brothers except for a few lay teachers) – it was both an exciting and challenging time.

We met so many friends and fellow classmates from the Northside of Syracuse. We voted on school colors, our mission and our school song. We were given input on clubs, sports, drama, chorus and voting for class officers.

Rules had to be followed, as in any school environment, but we always felt special and tried to stretch our behaviors a bit – but paid for it. Like the day the seniors decided to have a senior skip day, and all went to Green Lakes to enjoy the beach. When we returned to school, we were called into the cafeteria and had to come in on a Saturday all day to "pay" for our day of fun.

I am proud of my years at BG, as I grew and matured. I have a strong faith that was instilled in me and has stayed with me throughout my last 50 years and will throughout the rest of my life. Be proud of what you have accomplished. I wish you success in your future years. Congratulations!
Patty Roche Alexander, Class of '70

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Congratulations! You will never forget these days and months, as you ended your classroom relationships and went to Zoom class! What I learned from my days at BG, as well as these times, is this:
Adversity makes you stronger. What you endure and learn in these difficult times will help you become better people. You will open your eyes to bigger issues than what you have witnessed in your 18 years. Bishop Grimes began that journey of enlightenment for me, with great teachers who saw things in me that I never saw in myself. They encouraged me and developed me to be a bigger person, to be more involved and caring with what was going on not only in my world, but the country and world as a whole.

Our class was the first, which meant we had to forge paths with administration to set our traditions. We had only one yearbook and had segregated classes the first two year, boys separate from girls. We had to wear a wool uniform every day with blazers, skirts and knee socks. I hope that our class set some traditions for you, helping pave the way for you to change what needed to be changed and keep what became close to your hearts as the essence of BG.

God was always a beacon for us, and I know that is still the foundation of Catholic schools. My faith became stronger with every prayer said for a special intention, class Mass or Holy Day Mass. It was clear that we, the people, are the church and, with Jesus leading us, we can do miraculous things. These times will test you and call you to greatness in ways you cannot imagine now. But, when you are writing as the 50-year class to the Class of 2070, you too will see where your education and formation at Grimes, with the purpose of God, leads you.

Farewell, and be proud to be a BG grad and newest alum! Follow your path with the certainty that you have all you need to go forward. When you become unsure, as will happen, seek God and trust the quiet answer that will come to your heart.

With much love and admiration to the class who will be our new leaders in a world that desperately needs you, I remain in awe of your strength.

Brenda Deyo Reichert, Class of '70

Mother of: Tracey Reichert, Class of '89; Michael Reichert, Class of '93; Carey Reichert, Class of '00

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As a BG graduate, I have an opportunity to reflect over the 50 years since my commencement. Immediately after graduation, I attended college in the west and received a deferment from the Vietnam conflict, which was very fortunate. Marriage, children and a successful 36-plus-year career followed.

What was the highlight of these years? People, relationships and faith. Success and “stuff” are nice but fleeting. Cherish your family and friends with all your being. Thank your higher power daily and love completely. Learn from your mistakes and forgive yourself. You will be happiest and remembered for who you are, not what you have. God Bless.

Chuck Eckermann, Class of '70

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Congratulations! I barely did it 50 years ago. I know I couldn't do it today. Best of everything to you all.
Tom Fletcher, Class of '70