

A Final Tribute to Saintsman's Daugherty Gymnasium
Daugherty Gym Final Mass
April 5, 2017
Homily by Dick Hardick OSA 1957

This old gym is just a building!

It is made from brick and steel and wood.
The bleachers always creek and the floor seems to be sinking.
It really is just an old building!

Nonetheless, this old building has experienced many shining moments.
It is a warehouse of innumerable memories and it could tell countless stories
about the lives of almost every young Saintsman.
For decades, over 200 banners cast shadows of champions over its hardwood floor.

If we listened very carefully I'll bet we could still hear echoes
and sounds from the past-
Cheers from the Pit,
Music from the Saints band,
Yelling from the cheerleaders,
Songs sung at mass by our student choir,
Even the always clever daily announcements,
And most especially, voices of Priests proclaiming the solemn words of consecration.

Over the years this edifice has presented us with exceptional
and time honored events-
fun freshmen overnight retreats
absolutely crazy and totally insane rallies
slightly scary freshmen dance lessons
contemplative prayer services
dynamic historic basketball games
grueling wrestling matches
wild volley ball games
and somewhat (genocidal) intramural games
notably spine-chilling dodgeball games
in which every player tried his hardest
to murdered his best friend!

Our little gymnasium is dear to the hearts of every Saintsman.
It is a place where the pit was born.
It is a place where we prayed and worshiped and celebrated
junior ring and baccalaureate masses.
And it is a place where we all sang our favorite songs-
The Fight Song, When the Saints go marching In, and our beloved Alma Mater.

Interestingly, the construction of Dougherty Gym began in 1950 and was completed in 1951. It was named in honor of
the Augustinian Provincial of the Province of St. Thomas of Villanova in Pennsylvania,
Father Joseph Dougherty O.S.A.

The gym was nearing completion in 1951 when Fr. Bob Gavotto and Fr. John Keller

as 14-year-old freshmen stepped onto this campus for the first time. They graduated in 1955.
It was their gym for four years as it was mine from 1953 until I graduated in 1957.
Today we say farewell to this building every Saintsman undeniably cherishes!
Today, also, is the last time we will be privileged to celebrate holy mass here in Daugherty Gymnasium.

I truly wonder if we can capture 65 years of the excitement, the drama,
the wonder and the magic Daugherty Gym holds in our minds and in our hearts?
I doubt it is possible to evaluate its importance, its significance, its impact
on the physical and educational lives of each of us?

What name, really, does justice to this place?
Do we call it, home, an arena? a theater? a hall of champions? a church?
I don't really know, all of these, perhaps.
Yet, I do know, it is definitely a room where limitless,
boundless and undoubtedly never-ending memories began for each of us.
Daugherty Gymnasium changed our lives!

As a Saints family, we are thrilled as we look forward to the new community center.
Hopefully, we can learn from the success and achievements of the past
to see what the future will hold for the new St. Augustine Commons.
As our president Mr. Ed Hearn said, the Commons will be a place where Saintsman will form lasting friendships and
brother-hood that will endure for a lifetime.

To my students, I posed the question: "what was special about the old gym?"
Here are their responses-
It is small so we could stay close as a community
So many memories there and so many traditions.
The rallies and mass are some of the most memorable traditions for me.
Memories of so many amazing events for so many Saintsman
It was the center of life at Saints

My friend Tom Graciano, class of 1968, wrote to me saying:
The gym was our church where we celebrated our oneness with God in the mass.
It was the one place on campus that symbolized home away from home.

To my students I posed a second question:
"why should we be excited about having a new community center?"
My students responded:
It will be a great place to create new memories and events.
An opportunity to build a new culture and experiences
To create a new form of brotherhood
I am excited for the new traditions to come
It will be wonderful and a great part of the saints community
It's going to be fun-I am excited and I can't wait!

I believe that the new community center will educate and enrich the lives
of many Saintsman and enhance their futures. The opportunities for new traditions are endless.
You and I only need to dream a little, since we have such wonderful traditions to build upon.
It will be up to each of us to invent new ways to express and live out the Augustinian values
of community, truth and love.

Our most valuable tradition is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and it happens here each week.

During the mass, we experience the most solemn and reverent celebration of Christ's passion and death. Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty...whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood will never die. We believe Christ's flesh is true food, and his blood is true drink. During this sacred ceremony, we receive food and strength for our journey through life. It is here in this old gym that we walk on Holy ground.

As we prepare our hearts to celebrate The Last Supper on Holy Thursday, the passion and death of Jesus on Good Friday and his glorious Resurrection on Easter Sunday, let us remember that during these forty days of Lent, God calls us from death to life, from darkness to light, and from sin to forgiveness.

Through our acts of prayer, fasting and alms giving Our lord promises to heal the eyes of our hearts so that we can recognize his real presence in other people.

Although the world falsely tells us that satisfying our appetites is the goal and the purpose of our entire lives, we chose to fast from food and drink.

We give alms to the poor without expecting anything in return, even though the world tells us to do the opposite.

Despite the fact that the world tells us, our money, our time, and our life is exclusively your own. We chose to spend time with God in prayer because we know that all we possess, our life and talents are gifts from Him.

So, we rejoice because we are blessed with remarkable new beginnings with hearts cleansed and refreshed by our Lenten sacrifices, hearts overflowing with the hope and joy of Christ's Resurrection and with an extraordinary new Augustinian community Center

Fellow Saints, let us pray for that same courage shown by three young men in the reading from Daniel who were thrown into the white-hot furnace because they would not bow to the King's golden image and deny their God:

- the courage to walk in the footsteps of Christ
- and the courage to live holy lives in a challenging world.

With only a few days left in the season of lent the words of the prophet Joe are encouraging:

"Even now, says the Lord, return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, and weeping, and mourning.

Return to the Lord, your God. For gracious and merciful is he, slow to anger, rich in kindness, and abounding in steadfast love."

It seems fitting to close with words from our Alma Mater sung here by each of you so many times. Saints never forget, "As the twilight shadows gather out upon the campus green" that as authentic "loyal sons of St. Augustine," your feet have left memorable footprints here, and what you have achieved has left remarkable echoes reverberating in this treasured hall.