

Chapel Talk  
Viviana Davila  
January 31, 2018

“It’s not talking of LOVE, but living in love, that is everything.”

Years ago, I received an e-mail from Mr. Roach asking me as an alumnus to take a moment to reflect on my high school years and to respond truthfully about how I felt during my time here. He asked if I had ever felt isolated, distant, discriminated against or completely alone being the only student from Puerto Rico at the School during that time. I have to say that it did not take me long to respond because I remember vividly how much love I felt during my confusing adolescent years.

Let me take you back to the 1980s when we did not have access to social media or computers or cell phones. We had a public phone in our corridor where we would literally line up to take turns to call home or friends. We received an abundant amount of daily letters in the mailroom, letters that have now been replaced by e-mail, texting or social media. We were not able to download music; we made cassettes of our favorite music to play at the Saturday night dances. We made sure that everyone’s music choice was met—we made a playlist and posted it outside the Dining Hall for suggestions. When we met a new classmate, teammate or a dorm-mate, we would make plans to hit the tennis or squash courts to continue to get to know each other even better. On dorm, we would spend time playing cards, board games, or creating collages from magazines or newspapers that represented our mood. During the winter months, we would spend many weekends ice skating on our pond or sledding down any hills that we could find around campus.

These may all just sound like my own fond memories, but I tell you all of this because I want you to know how important it was to be able to step off dorm and feel so included and loved by your peers, upper-formers and the faculty. Our teachers never replaced our parents, but I can honestly say they were ALL godparents to the student body. I remember my own teachers, just like you all have today—Ms. Pressman on Pell or Mrs. Berl on Moss—who baked for us or made us coffee/Oreo milkshakes or simply made us feel at home in their dorm apartment or any campus home. If we were having an academic struggle or needed extra help sessions, they were always available. It was so clear how much they wanted us to aim high and succeed, how much they wanted us to be the best that we could be. They were and still are amazing role models!

Today, when I see how technology is replacing many of these interactions, I become saddened that you all may not have the same experiences I had at St. Andrew's. At times, we may feel that we are running a marathon to keep up with all the technological gadgets we feel we “need” to fit in or to feel connected. Believe me, I'm guilty of this as well. But I'm here to ask you to please make time to STOP, PAUSE, and WALK beside a friend who needs more of your sincerity and less of the artificial connection that takes place over social media. Sometimes we all feel a void inside of ourselves, for whatever reason. Real human connection—face-to-face interaction—is a much more powerful tool in helping each other combat those low moments than technology will ever be.

Some of us have grown up with much more than others, but those same individuals may be missing out on the true meaning of love. While writing this piece, I took a moment to look up the meaning of LOVE—‘an intense feeling of deep affection.’ In the Bible, 1 Corinthians 16:14 states, “Let all that you do be done in love.” I

remember feeling that intense feeling of deep affection for my St. Andrew's classmates, teammates and roommates. We felt like family. We studied together, we complained to each other about the workload or about the grading system in this class or that class, we got pumped up together for games—not so much for practices—because you know why? We lived together, entertained each other, and we knew each other so well off the field or outside of the classroom that it made playing a sport or taking a class that much more fun. We were dynamic and TRULY connected. I attribute that camaraderie to the quality of the time we spent together. During my college years, whenever I did not feel quite myself, it was so easy to write a letter to my wonderful Saints roommate or to any of my high school friends. We shared so much with each other during our teenage years and we have always been there for one another till this day.

I urge you to choose spending time with your classmates, teammates, and dorm mates, over texting or Snapchatting or whatever to communicate with them. Connecting over social media is not truly showing LOVE. We all arrive on this earth alone, but we are unable to survive without the swaddle of our parents' or grandparents' LOVE for long. Once we depart that nest, we must learn to connect and lean on others to fill the void of uncertainty and anxiety that may creep up and surprise us as we attempt to roll daily with the challenges of life. Take time to get to know someone new in person, or make the relationships you have established thus far even stronger. Going for a walk, playing a game, making a collage together or hitting the fields to play a pick-up soccer & Frisbee game—these are all entertaining activities that you can do to steer yourself and others away from our die-hard habits of connecting over social media and technology. You will only understand that deep affection for others when you let everything that you DO, be done in love. May God Bless ALL of you!