

We are here today to dedicate this baseball stadium in honor of Fr. Paul Sheridan.

I am truly humbled to be speaking in honor of Fr. Paul. Many of you have known Paul longer and better than Debbie and me, so we hope that we can adequately represent all of you in these words of dedication.

Debbie and I have known Fr. Paul for only a scant few years, but as most of you know, that is more than enough time for him to make a serious impression on anyone. You often hear the description, “larger than life”, used to describe something or someone. Until Father Paul entered our lives, I don’t know that I had ever met a person that deserved that description. As all of you know, Paul cuts a wide swath wherever he goes, and whatever he does. He is always relentlessly pursuing his life’s missions, which are many, too many to list here today, but we all know they are God’s missions. No one could argue that Paul lives every moment of every day “for the greater glory of God”.

We are irresistibly drawn to Fr. Paul like moths to a flame.

We all know, though, if we are in the same room with Paul, and sometimes I think if we are even in the same zip code, he can reach into your soul and touch you.

But watch out when this happens, it usually means you will either agree to donate a lot of time, or a little bit of money, and probably some of both!

Yet why are we drawn so compellingly to this humble man doing God's work on earth? We could point to many reasons, but I think it comes down to one word.

He inspires us... He inspires us.... He inspires us to live generously, as men and women for others. As the Ignatian Prayer for Generosity says,

Lord,

Teach me to serve as you deserve;

To give, and not to count the cost;

To fight, and not to heed the wounds;

To toil, and not to seek for rest;

To labor, and not to ask for reward;

Save, that of knowing

I am doing your will.

Paul exemplifies, and lives, these words every day.

The plaque of dedication reads, "Sheridan Stadium, in honor of Fr. Paul Sheridan, S.J., President, Teacher, Coach, and Priest.

We could speak for hours on Fr. Paul's impact, and accomplishments, in each of these roles. The tens of thousands of lives he has touched, and changed, and inspired, in each of the roles. But I know Paul well enough to know he does not

want anyone to stand here and list his incredible accomplishments. It would take hours, and we have a ballgame to play, right Father? But even if we attempted to list a representative few, we would miss the staggering impact his actions have had.

In Economics, they call it the “multiplier effect”. The multiplier effect describes the huge impact even a small economic change can make. For instance, the impact of someone having an additional \$100 of income to spend, is not simply \$100 added to the economy. If the person then spends their additional \$100, the new recipient of that money, may in turn spend all or part of it, and then a third recipient receives part of it, and spends it again, and so on, thereby multiplying, and dwarfing, the impact of the original \$100.

Paul may have used this argument on some of you to encourage a donation, if not he is probably making a mental note right now....., but we digress.

The multiplier effect, as it applies to Fr. Paul is even more profound. He “inspires” people. Everyday, and at every juncture, he inspires people to be more than they are, and to do more than they otherwise would. Those of us so “inspired”, turn around and inspire other people, living as men and women for others, in turn, inspiring and encouraging others by our own example. The “Sheridan multiplier effect” is almost beyond comprehension.

So why do we dedicate this obscure corner of the campus to someone who has had such an enormous impact on our society, on us, and on the future of SLUH?

The simple answer is, ...it is the most we could get away with. When Fr. Paul announced he was leaving SLUH for Bellarmine College Prep in San Jose, it was no surprise that he gave express orders; there was to be no fanfare, no banquets, no toasts, and most of all, no dedications. Then he slipped out of town, leaving many of us feeling we never had a chance to honor him in a meaningful way.

Fast forward to today. How does naming this ball field, located in the far corner of this campus, after Paul Sheridan, suitably honor him for all he has done? Well, it doesn't.

We just hope that, in a small way, and we hope a very meaningful way, we can express our thanks to Paul by naming this field Sheridan Stadium.

This baseball stadium, along with the soccer and track stadium over there, and the beautiful Drury Plaza, and the soon to be erected Student Life Center on the hill over there, were all part of a capital campaign called Vision 2000. Vision 2000 was the brainchild, and the mission, of Fr. Paul. It was, by far, the most ambitious campaign in the history of the school, and its success was driven by you know who.

The beautiful grounds we are standing on, represent only a small part, and to some, the least meaningful part of Vision 2000. Much of the money raised went to expanding faculty and academic programs, the results of which we see every day, in the quality of students and faculty we are able to attract, and the academic accomplishments they achieve. Did everyone see the Post Dispatch article this week? It said, if the ACT had a hall of fame, SLUH would be inducted. Eight perfect scores in three years. WOW!

Much of the money from V2K also went to the school's endowment, which funds economic scholarship for those that need financial assistance to attend this great institution.

But because of Fr. Paul's vision, and insistence, a small but significant share of the campaign proceeds went to this campus expansion and these athletic fields. Paul's insistence on the importance of co-curricular activities, in the formation of "men for others", can be seen here today.

Anyone that has participated in sports, or other co-curriculars, knows the lessons about ourselves, and about others, that can be learned on the athletic field, on the stage, across the chess board, in the rec room, in the Stuco office, or yes, even in the rifle range. Co-curriculars teach us so much about character, fairplay, and teamwork. We learn the value of hard work, sacrifice, patience, and humility. At an academically challenging school like SLUH, students are forced to learn

prioritization and time management. I can only marvel at the sacrifices many of these young men make, in order to participate in sports and other co-curriculars.

Co-curriculars also allow us to learn harsh lessons about life, that we don't necessarily learn in the classroom. The best players do not always make the team or the starting lineup; the best team does not always win; statistics do not always tell the full story; coaches are fallible, but they are still the coach; a lapse in concentration can cause embarrassment and defeat. As tough as they are to swallow, these are invaluable lessons to these young men facing adult- life's realities.

The ecstasy of victory and the agony of defeat. We hopefully, learn to win with dignity, and lose with dignity. I have no doubt these five Jesuit School teams playing in this baseball tournament have been instructed well in this regard.

But back to Father Paul. We do not want to shift the attention away from him. While the dedication of this baseball stadium, may seem not significant enough to honor Paul's legacy here at SLUH, it is, hopefully, sentimentally appropriate to him, and to all of us.

Father Paul has a deep love for baseball. He played baseball at a high level as a young man, and coached freshmen baseball for most of his tenure at SLUH.

Amidst his overwhelming year-round calendar, Fr Paul would squeeze out those precious hours each year to spend on the field with those eager freshmen. He delighted in them, and they in him. It was probably the best part of his day, besides Mass and teaching Theology, and one he cherished as his escape from the demands of being President and all his other activities and involvements.

Our son, Nick, was lucky enough to play for Fr. Paul as a freshman. That was the last year Fr. Paul was able to coach baseball. Those last freshmen he coached are now seniors, and several of them are on the Varsity Squad playing here tonight.

Watching Paul coach a baseball game was a delight. From infield practice, through the pregame pep talk, and during the between-inning pep talks, those eager-to-please faces, staring back at him, must be a fond memory for him. Some of the most fun, though, for the boys and the parents, was Fr. Paul's interplay with the umpires. Never was so much rapt attention given to a coach's reaction to a bad call.

Paul is a competitor, and he knows a bad call when he sees one. His mostly- calm reaction was a sight to see. He would subdue his competitive reactions and calmly call to the umpire. He would say, "Hey blue...", and then he would beckon the ump towards him, with a slight chin moving invitation, for a conference. If the ump showed a willingness to talk, Fr. Paul would begin his painful lumber towards the umpire.

The boys, and parents, would watch in anticipation, wondering if this was the time Fr. Paul would become a little animated, maybe kick some dirt, raise his voice, tell the ump he would be better off selling women's shoes.... But no, Fr. Paul used his painful, lumbering moments to gather himself, and then calmly discuss how he saw the play. What a great example for parents and boys alike.

By the end of the conversation, we parents figured Paul had "inspired" the umpire, to donate his umpiring stipend to SLUH Cares, and convinced him to volunteer for cleanup after CASHBAH.

In closing, I know Coach Nicollerat will never forget to remind the boys what it means to put on the SLUH uniform, what they represent when they cross the foul line to play for St. Louis University High School. I also hope he and all the coaches will always teach their players who the Stadium is named after, and most of all, why.

Fr. Paul Sheridan, President, Teacher, Coach, and Priest...

Ladies and gentlemen,Sheridan Stadium.....

And the man himself,Fr. Paul Sheridan.....