Trinity Class of 2023, welcome! As you unite for one of the first times as a grade, I encourage you all to welcome each and every one of your neighbors with open arms and an open heart. For those of you coming from different schools and different walks of life, you are in the midst of a dramatic transition that can feel both scary and exciting. And for those of you who have spent the past ten years attending the same institution here on 91st street between Columbus and Amsterdam, you too are about to experience Trinity like never before.

To answer the million dollar question, I’d like to admit to you all that, yes, the next four years will be challenging. Your self-discipline will be put to the test with a cornucopia of unbeatable math problems, 20 page history study guides, complicated science labs, and many many analytical essays. While your intelligence will be pushed to its limits here, you will be faced with another challenge much less linear than the rest. This challenge involves committing to your peers to be engaged and stay engaged throughout your time here. I’m not saying you must join every club at school or become friends with everyone in this room. Instead, I encourage you all to look at your education from a different vantage point. One that involves a deep engagement with your community. One that forces you to actually feel, laugh, hurt, and do so openly, as a, unique, united entity. I encourage each and every one of you to speak to everyone in your grade at some point this year. Rather than closing yourself off with your work, be open to new relationships with the many unfamiliar faces before you. Like it or not, you are the ones who will eat lunch together, sit in chapel together, perform in plays together, and be on sports teams together. So, don’t hold back. I am asking you to eat with a fresh face during lunch, say hi to everyone, and be the weirdest group of ninth graders ever. You see, if you experience Trinity with tunnel vision you, as an individual, will survive here but it will not be memorable. Truly thriving here takes a community.