



# **A Graduation They Will Never Forget: St. Mary's Catholic School Honors Grads in 'Drive-In' Style**

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ALTON - On Monday, May 18, in the parking lot of the middle school campus on Milton Road in Alton, the St. Mary's Catholic School eighth-grade class did something they will never forget - they graduated in "drive-in" style due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Because of the current COVID-19 social distancing restrictions, traditional graduation was not possible. Less than two weeks before the graduation date, St. Mary's received the green light to do a "drive-in" style graduation.

Twenty-six students gathered with their families, their teachers, the principal, the dean of students and the priests of St. Mary's to mark their successful completion of eighth

grade. The automobiles of the gathered were arranged in two semi-circles in front of the parish center, where a stage had been erected and decorated for the ceremony. The students and those conducting the graduation had masks on for the event.

“We have an amazing team here at St. Mary’s, and they all stepped up to make this happen for the students,” said Dean of Students, Beth Hogg. "As the students turned their tassels, the parking lot erupted in honking horns along with the usual applause. This is a graduation these students will never forget!"

The pastor of St. Mary's - Father Jeremy Paulin, OMV - opened the ceremony with thanksgiving to all who had brought their students to this point in their formation, expressing pride in what these graduates had accomplished even in difficult times. He encouraged them to stay close to Mary for the rest of their lives as she had played a large part in bringing them to this point.

The Principal, Alex Pulido, addressed the student body recalling all the blessings and many of the good things they had experienced together at St. Mary's School over the years. Pulido congratulated them on a job well done, encouraging them to look with hope toward high school and what lies beyond.

The students achieved many awards and scholarships and each approached the stage individually to receive their diploma.

Paulin said: "We all were very grateful that the school year ended so well even though much of what has been planned for the graduates were not able to take place. All were also delighted for the fact that the rain held off the entire time the ceremony was held outside in the parking lot."

