

UB coach tells St. Joseph University grads to not be afraid to fail

By **PATRICK J. BUECHI**
Staff Reporter

St. Joseph University School in Buffalo had a slam dunk of a graduation as UB's Women's Basketball coach cheered the students who had a victory over the eighth grade.

Coach Felisha Legette-Jack, who led the Bulls to their most historic season in program history, had a simple message for the 16 graduates during their June 20 commencement ceremony – “Yes, you can.”

“Just those three words. You can do anything you want to do,” she explained as a preview of her address. “Don't let anybody stop you. Don't be afraid. You're going to have something in your belly. 'Am I going to be good enough to go into the ninth grade?' 'Am I good enough to take that next step?' You're going to be good enough, and everyone is going to be as good as you, so go forward knowing that God is with you and so are we.”

The Syracuse native addressed the graduates without written notes. Like a good coach reading the arena, she delivered from her heart. She described herself as shy in high school, walking around with her head down until 10th grade, when she discovered sports. Realizing that it is not easy for everyone to discover the subject they excel in, Legette-Jack encouraged the students to not be afraid to fail.

“You have to get up there and try. You have to fail. In order to be something significant, you have to push yourself beyond your comfort zone, and that is going to push you to failure. When you fail, you will find a greater person from within. Know that failure is part of your growth,” she said. “The most important person on your road to success is yourself.”

Valedictorian Sophia Beckly-Forest and salutatorian Anger Ayiy also offered encouraging words to their fellow students.

Father Jacob Ledwon, pastor of St. Joseph University Parish and School, along with Principal Mark Mattle and Assistant Principal Anne Wojick presented diplomas to the students, who also received scholarships and awards for their specific talents. The awards were named after patrons of those talents, such as the St. Cecelia Award for Excellence in Music, St. Sebastian Award for Excellence in Physical Education, and St. Paul Award for Excellence in Reading.

St. Joseph University is the oldest Catholic school in the diocese. Founded in 1850 by German farmers, the school grew to 400 students. Now 165 kids from all over the city and some suburbs attend the school, located in the University Heights area of Buffalo. Many of the students go on to the high school of their choice and college.

The school offers a gifted and talented program called Flight, that allows its students to discover



DAN CAPPELLAZZO/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The keynote speaker, University at Buffalo Women's Basketball coach Felisha Legette-Jack, spoke to the graduates of St. Joseph University School about the importance of hard work and faith in their lives to help them achieve their goals.

their own strengths.

“It's unlike anyone I have ever seen,” said Principal Mattle. “At the young ages, they all get it. It's like the philosophy ‘Everyone is gifted and talented.’ Then when they get to the middle school they self-select, and it becomes more of an independent thing to be in there.”

This fall will see the second

year for the Leader in Me program. Based on Stephen Covey's “Seven Habits of Highly Effective People,” the program sets out to create student leadership.

“We're always looking for the next thing that we can really do that's cutting edge. It's a commitment to not just do the same old, same old,” explained Father Ledwon.