

Student Lasallian Commencement Address

May 2017

Presented by: Amanda Patenoude

Good Afternoon, members of the Board of Trustees, Dr. Livingston, honored guests, faculty, staff, graduates, parents, and friends.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Lewis Family and those who have been a strong support system for me including family, friends, my sorority sisters and exceptional professors. You have guided me to this honor.

Today is an important milestone that has taken dedication, endurance, knowledge, commitment and growth to accomplish. We are really excited to be here. I want to share some points to reflect on before this chapter of our lives closes and a very new and uncertain new chapter unfolds. The uncertain feeling, we may have been inevitable but we have put in hard work and dedication. That is why we are sitting here today, able to say proudly that we are the Lewis University graduating Class of 2017!

My grandma motivated my undergraduate years with an inspiring thought. She would see me studying at the kitchen table with lots of books in front of me and would say, “sometimes in life we must do things that we may not want to do but we do what we have to do to come out ahead, to be better.” As we sit here today we are living by this idea that we are meant for something better because we know we can be better. Better for ourselves, better for our community, thus a better Lasallian.

John Baptist De La Salle a very long time ago understood that everyone deserved a chance at an education because it is a major contributor to success. As many of us began searching for a

college, we believed that a college education would be a key to our successful future. And so, we looked for a college that would accept us but also a community that would give us the tools for our future. We found that in Lewis and its Lasallian Traditions. As we embark on different journeys that will lead us down many roads remember where we started and that someone saw something greater in us so, I believe that we are obliged to see something greater in every person that we meet.

Pope Francis once said, “But to all of you, especially those who can do more and give more, I ask: Please, do more! Please, give more! When you give of your time, your talents and your resources to the many people who struggle and who live on the margins, you make a difference. It is a difference that is so desperately needed, and one for which you will be richly rewarded by the Lord.”

In our undergrad years, we were always told to give back and provide a light to those that are not as fortunate as ourselves. I am sure that many of us were not aware that giving back to the community was something that we were expected to do, I mean hello, I’m trying to prepare myself for a brighter future and that means... I have 18 credit hours, homework, tests, papers, 50 hours of teaching observations and if I’m lucky 5 hours of sleep and yet that’s what being Lasallian means.

In my Junior year, I had signed up for a Service Learning Class. When it became clear to me what the class entailed, the first thought that crossed my mind was, can I get out of this class? I felt overwhelmed and the semester hadn’t even started. Contemplating my options, I decided to stay in that class, and I am so blessed because my experiences transformed me. I volunteered at SOS Children’s Village in nearby Lockport. SOS is an organization that makes it possible for siblings to stay together in a foster community of homes. I was more overwhelmed when they

placed me as a volunteer in a home of 7 children! Yes, seven children ranging in age from 2 to 16! It gets even more challenging. I had to tutor in high school Algebra if you ask my students which subject Ms. Patenoude feared the most, unanimously all of them would yell MATH!

And guess what they were right!

But thankfully, I got through it and by the end of the semester I decided that I liked what I was doing. I extended my initial community services hours and I stayed an extra year. One minute I was teaching parabolas and the next minute we were singing our ABCs and learning our sight words. I wish that I could say that the children learned from me but really, they taught me that the stress of college and learning to create balance was such a minute struggle in comparison to what my little ones were going through.

Lasallian traditions emphasize that we have a duty to provide support and hope for those that cannot live a sustainable and comfortable life. I am proud to say that the children I worked with taught me to reflect on what it means to give back and that we reap the rewards of the effort that we put into something.

As Lasallians, we have a calling to help those less fortunate than ourselves. As we leave Lewis as Lasallian graduates and pursue our careers we need to remind ourselves of our Lasallian values to share what we have with those that have less. We are called to give back.

As we near our final moments as undergrads I ask that we reflect on what it means to be Lasallian? More importantly, what does it mean to graduate from a Lasallian institution? As we grow and prosper it is to us to uphold the Lasallian traditions of serving others that have been instilled in us. I would like to leave you with these words spoken by Jane Goodall, an advocate for protecting all of God's creatures, "You cannot get through a single day without having an

impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make”? And so, I ask you this, are we as Lasallians and Lewis graduates willing to make a difference in our world? I hope so.

Congratulations Class of 2017.