

Student Lasallian Commencement Address
May 2013
Presented by: Cassandra Meyers

Good afternoon, members of the Board of Trustees, Brother James, honored guests, faculty, staff, fellow graduates, parents, family and friends.

First off, I want to truly commend all of the graduates for the long hours, sleepless nights, and difficult studying. While Brother James is going to bestow a degree to you today, remember that no one just handed it to you. Your education was earned. You should be proud, you should be excited, and you should thank everyone around you who helped you make it happen. None of us got here alone without a great friend, a tough professor, or an understanding set of parents.

Roughly four years ago, most of us were bright-eyed, bushy-tailed freshmen, moving into our residence halls and trying to make friends during Welcome Days. During this time, we each heard a lot about the mission of the university and of being Lasallian; but, I'll be honest, it didn't really make sense to me yet. Each of us figured it out- at our own pace- what being Lasallian meant to us. Maybe it was a service project that made it click for you; perhaps the Koinonia retreat. Possibly it was having a Christian Brother as a professor and realizing how much he cared about your education. For me, it was becoming aware of social justice. I came from a farm town and knew little of the world outside my own. Lewis changed that. Taking a wide array of classes, from philosophy to criminal law to even cultures and civilization, really taught me about the world. Then, Lewis University gave me the resources to do something about my world around me. I diversified my education, I volunteered to work with immigrants and underprivileged kids, I made my own discoveries in the laboratory. Through my experience, I finally understood the real world implications of our mock trial cases, I understood the social changes our professors talked about, and I understood that my calling, the way I would reach my community, was through justice- just as the mission said. The fundamental rule by which I live my life is the idea that all of us are equals and that I have to help shape my outside world to mirror Lewis University's message. I know from talking to this motivated group of graduates that each of you remembers the experience that helped you find your own passion and the way you would minister to the world.

Yet in that, we must realize, all of us are different. Obviously, not all 600 of you are going off to law school to fight for the causes that I hold dear. Each of us has our own calling, our own talent, our own vocation that Lewis University has helped cultivate. That's why Lewis has over eighty majors; because each of us has our own personal mission and because you do not want a person like me fixing your airplane.

And then there were the moments of doubt. Each and every one of us here today, besides just the graduates, has had a terrifying moment when you think that this isn't it, or you're not good enough. Mine was during organic chemistry lab, my sophomore year. I was still shaky on the chemistry degree, seeing as I wanted to be a lawyer, and I was ready to go home after three and a half hours in the lab. One of the last instructions was to wait for the solution to cool before adding the next chemical. But, it was 5:30, I was starving, and my lab partner and I thought rules were for suckers, what's the worst that could happen? And then, when we added the reagent, there was a loud pop, a small flash, and our faces were covered in solution. Now, I wasn't worried about the potential liver damage from the dichloromethane and I was wearing my safety goggles, but in my head I had the internal soundtrack of "Oh God, oh God, I'm not cut out for college. I'm not cut out for my degree. Dr. K is going to yell at me. I can't do this!" But I am receiving my chemistry degree today. I did it. And so did each of you. The fear and the doubt will fade, and you will find your passion, your bliss.

Now, if you're like me, and since many of you are sitting here in a graduation gown, I'm going to guess you are; you've been asked the "So, what are your plans for after graduation?" question by pretty much everyone who's ever met you. And, like me, you've probably, at some point, given a deer in the headlights stare before giving a desperately vague reply. If you're going to grad school your first answer is confident, "I'm going to graduate school!" but when followed by the follow up "And after that?" you continue with the deer in the headlights stare. I'm here to tell you today, that that's okay. We have our entire lives ahead of us, so if right now you are just enormously happy that you will be a degree holder in roughly ten minutes, then that really is fantastic. Don't for a second look at this and think that this is the end, because this is only the beginning of the rest of a fulfilling life. And Lewis University is the foundation.

Each and every one of us has that Lasallian foundation. Whether you like it or not, you are inexplicably connected to the people in this room. But, like I said, this is the beginning. A foundation is worthless unless you build something on it. Build a meaningful career and life that you can be happy with. That foundation may weather some cracks during the years, but we are family, and we will always be here for

you to repair them. So now is the time to start building. But remember where you came from; remember the principles that built your education.

In this room, each of us has the people whom are most important to us. Personally, among you are my best friends, my greatest teachers, and my steadfast parents. Everyone can think to one or two professors who really guided you through the maze of college; for me, those were Dr. Houlihan and Dr. Keleher who both helped me find my passions in life and to them I am so thankful. Everyone has had a near nervous breakdown phone call to a trusted friend; let them know you value their friendship. And mostly, at points during these years, we have made our parents worried, annoyed, bewildered, and so very proud. Thank them.

Now as you walk across the stage today, be proud of yourself. Smile. Take in the sunlight on this beautiful day that you will remember for the rest of your life. You are a degree holder and no one can ever take that from you. Just remember Lewis University. Remember the people who gave their lives to teach you. Remember your personal mission. Today is the first day of the rest of your lives graduates; now go cherish it.

Congratulations and God bless you all in your endeavors.