

Lasallian Commencement Address

May 1997

Presented by: Kimberly McMurray

Members of the Board of Trustees, President Brother James Gaffney, Faculty, Staff, Graduates and Families and Friends of Lewis University:

Four years ago, I never would have imagined that I would give the student address at my graduation. You see, four years ago, I was quiet, timid and unsure of myself. If someone would have told me then that I would speak in front of 4000 or so people, I never would have believed it.

I remember my first "public appearance". I was seven years old. At an amusement park, I was asked to be part of a dancing show. All we had to do was carry an oversized cut out of a lollypop and skip in a circle. Seemed easy enough. But when I got in front of all those people, I froze and the other kids skipped around me.

So, how did I end up here, in front of all of you? I am talking to you because I have learned to believe in myself through the support I've received and the challenges I've met as a student here. I am talking to you because I believe that the Mission of Lewis can change people's lives.

Lewis has many very special people working here. People who see potential in a quiet, timid young student. People who are actively involved in developing that potential.

This is the very heart of Lewis. As are the values defined in the University Mission Statement. In my opinion, two of those values which impact student lives the most are justice and Fidelity.

I am sure that each graduate can think back over their years here and remember at least one faculty or staff member who daily challenged them to live up to the potential inside.

Recognizing our own potential is perhaps one of the hardest things for us to do, but when someone else sees it and settles for nothing short of excellence, then we can soar toward our dream and beyond what we thought possible.

Remember those times when an instructor handed back a paper to be re-written, yet again? Or when a coach pushed you to run a little faster, to throw a little farther? Or when you came from an eight hour work day into a three hour night class and the instructor required you to stay alert and participate? At those times, we were challenged to live up to our potential. That is how justice works in our lives. Justice is recognizing the value of human beings, of human potential. Justice is what calls us to be constantly reaching higher, always striving beyond what we think are our limits.

But going the extra mile isn't enough when you're running a marathon. You must persevere to the finish even when it seems a long way off. But we never, make the journey alone. There are many people who coach us along the way, who help us, challenge us, and believe that we will indeed finish the journey.

Today, this leg of the race is over for the graduates. The faculty and staff of Lewis University, our families, and our friends have been there every step of the way. Those who walked with us through these years of learning and growth have shown us the fidelity we needed to see to keep going.

When I think of the Mission Value of Fidelity, I am always reminded of the prayer Footprints in the Sand, a story of a man who dreams he is walking along a beach with his God, while across the sky, scenes from his life flash. Most of the time, the man and his God leave behind two sets of footprints. But he notices that during the most troubled times of his life, there is only one set of footprints. He questions his God, who replies, "It was during the most difficult times that I carried you." I think that all of the graduates can remember times when they were carried by friends, family or their God.

Faith comes in many forms. It is present in loving people who have faith in us to accomplish our dreams. It is present in ourselves when we are confident enough to

overcome obstacles and earn the honor of sitting here in black robes and funny hats.

To me, Lewis University is a special place because of the faith that so many faculty and staff had in me. They helped me change from a timid girl into a woman confident enough to speak to you today.

I think I speak for all of our graduates when I thank you, the faculty and staff of Lewis University, for justly seeing our potential, challenging us to achieve it, and loyally walking with us as we conquered hurdle after hurdle to make it to this finish line.

And, I also think I speak for the graduates when I thank the families and friends here today for showing us their fidelity, and so freely giving of their encouragement, their strength, and their love. We wouldn't have made it without you. I love you, Mom.

As we leave today, we begin new ventures, a new part of our journeys. I pray that as we look to the future, we also look to our past here at Lewis with gratitude and joy that we were able to be a part of the Lewis Mission.

Let us take one lesson from the Mission, which is embodied in the Koinonia Retreat Program Motto: May we act justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly with our God.

God bless.