

Student Lasallian Commencement Address
December 2003
Presented by Patrick J. Smith

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

I remember clearly my first day at Lewis. I can remember standing in the doorway in Fitzpatrick Hall on move in day. Just as many of you felt, I can remember feeling anxious about meeting new people, excited about flying an airplane for the first time, a little scared of the years ahead of me, and sad to leave my family and friends behind. For the first time, my mom was not going to be around to make me lunch and dinner, dad wasn't going to be around to keep me in check, and my sister wasn't going to be around to laugh with. I have always been a firm believer in family and community. Luckily, Lewis was able to provide a community to complement my family and expand my horizons. I still had a hot meal every night with a group of friends, my friends kept me in check, and there were plenty of people to laugh with. That weekend I was introduced into the Lasallian lifestyle. We gathered together and participated in different activities and began to grow as a class and a community. The foundation we have received here in academics, service, and community will continue to help shape our lives and the lives around us.

St. John Baptist de la Salle founded the Christian Brothers who sponsor Lewis University. It was his deep faith and values which provide the foundation for the Lewis mission. He was a man dedicated to his faith and service for others. He brought innovative ideas and instructional methods to education. Day after day our lives are affected and influenced by his teachings and values. He gave up his wealth and social status to live with the poor and educate them as well. Truly, as graduates of Lewis, we must follow this example and make an impact on the lives of those around us.

Our University has a mission to educate and develop the minds and hearts of young and old alike. Although each Lasallian value has its importance, the value of association holds a special place in my heart; through association, we promote

collegiality and an atmosphere where individuals work together to benefit the students and the surrounding community.

Just like many of you, throughout my time at Lewis I have gathered with many different organizations and cultures seeking to better those around me as well as to pursue specific interests and just to have fun. Each of these organizations has a social component and so we looked outside of ourselves to help others.

Lewis offers many ways to help others. By participating in outreach opportunities, we have all had the opportunity to enter the community in one way or another, and we have learned not only to help each other, but also to help those in need just as St. John Baptist de la Salle did. Unique outlets such as Outreach, sponsored by University Ministry, allowed us to build association on campus as well as outside of Lewis, by providing opportunities such as service trips to Bolivia, trips to Soup Kitchens, and even tutoring children through Big Brothers/Big Sisters. By reaching out to the poor and unfortunate, I have looked into their eyes just as de la Salle and many others before me. A warm conversation, a smile, and even serving food has helped change the world we live in. Tutoring 3rd graders who live in challenging neighborhoods has allowed me to share my Lasallian values with an up and coming generation. Just as St. LaSalle is a role model for me, I am a role model for the child I tutor. By building a diverse community and enriching their minds, we have lived the mission supported by our University.

Tomorrow begins a new chapter in our lives, but our upbringing and educational foundation will stand strong. Many of us will begin work, others will take time off, some will attend graduate school, and others may begin their journey as Lasallian volunteers. We will develop new relationships. But don't let this change in lifestyle hide our true character. Our true character will not be shown through dollar signs, or possessions. We have all been given the skills needed to pursue healthy and rich careers, but we have been given an even greater dimension to our character, that is our spirit for association deep within our hearts. And our real character will always stem from our experiences through our faith in God and service to our communities.

As graduates of Lewis University, we have been encouraged to continue our lives as Lasallians. To live a life as a Lasallian we must continue to follow in the footsteps of

St. LaSalle. He gave an effort that was filled with love, which allowed him to touch the lives of others; we must do the same. As we step into a new world of change, challenge, and uncertainty, our focus in life should not shift from our Lasallian values. Instead, we should build on our foundation. I can remember back to my Principles of Management class sophomore year. After talking about the Barracuda, and those of you who took this class will who I am talking about, Professor Pascale said that we can show true success not only in the business world, but in life, by living up to our own code of ethics and morals. You see not only did we learn business at Lewis, or how to nurse others to health, or how to fly planes, we gained wisdom and learned how to be just and ethical people. Therefore, we should strive to be ethical leaders in the new communities ahead of us. Letting go of Lewis and stepping into the world does not mean we cannot extend our hand for others. Indeed, de la Salle's teachings compel us to extend our hand even further. We are blessed to know that we have support from our university. Now it is our turn to share with the world the values we hold true in our hearts. As Archbishop Desmond Tutu once said, "Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world." We will each take our own paths in life, but lets each do our little bit of good wherever we go, and together lets overwhelm the world.