

Student Lasallian Commencement Address

May 2023

Presented by: Tyler Samaras

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

I want everyone to take a deep breath and just look around. This is the moment we've been waiting for. This was the moment we've been chasing for the past four years or even more. This is a moment we will **never forget**.

My college experience - from the people I've met, to the adventures I've experienced - I can guarantee you, this place was the real deal, and so today as the Lasallian speaker, I get to honor the achievements of my fellow graduates.

Graduation is such an exciting time for transition, a time for reflection, hope, and a little bit of anxiety. Right now, I'm looking at a sea of endless potential, a room full of determination and persistence. I would have also included hard workers, but we have a couple business majors here. I'm a business major.

As this ceremony progresses and the thought of the real world gets closer to us, I invite all of us to reflect on our experience during our college career.

Are you the same person you were freshman year? Are you still connected with the people you started with four years ago? Perhaps. But you have changed. You are different. You've grown in wisdom and gained a sense of purpose.

This sense purpose gives us direction, a path towards changing the world and influencing the lives of those around you. You see I believe the connections we made are the true gifts we get to reflect on tonight. And once again, take a moment and think about those who made your college experience worth it. Now I'd like you to think about of those most important to you.

Whether they are friends, siblings, parents, loved ones, those who stuck with you, those with you now, or those who taught you important lessons. They were your community of support for the last four or more years.

Community is something we may take for granted, but having people who make us feel at home, away from home is what makes life precious. It is essential that we thank these people today. Thank you.

Knowledge tells us that moments like these are just instances in our lives. Wisdom, however, allows us to appreciate these instances and recognize them for what they are – real learning opportunities.

Wisdom comes from knowledge and experience, and when we are wise enough to know that we need to be grateful, we have begun to appreciate the beauty life has to offer.

All is gift, and by God we need to be grateful. As you know, Lewis University is a Lasallian University meaning it is organized in the tradition of education inspired by John Baptist De La Salle, the Patron Saint of Teachers and founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. What can we learn from De La Salle and his example?... Well, his life can be very instructive for us, John Baptist de La Salle was willing to give up his family fortune because he recognized a need to educate impoverished children and give them a chance at life. His mission was to provide them with a dangerous tool that could change the world. That tool **was** an education.

As we leave here armed with an education, what are the opportunities we will take to make a difference? It's our responsibility to continue his mission and bring light into those conditions that we recognize as the darkest.

De La Salle encountered many failures in his pursuit of justice for the poor and forgotten, where he could not see the end result but still pursued his goal without certainty. We have learned that

he was willing to make sacrifices for his goals, was willing to endure failures and roadblocks, so can serve as a model for us in what we can do with courage and determination.

When we are unsure of success, I challenge all of us to pursue our goals even when faced with uncertainty. No one of us appreciate our failures when they occur; however, failures can be our greatest teacher if we allow them to be. You can look back and see where you went wrong, Where you picked yourself up and moved forward. Perhaps we've learned something from these experiences. If we can learn from them then, they may even make for some amazing stories down the road.

Now if you all don't mind, I would like to share just a few things I'm especially grateful for. My mom, my absolute rock, she has sacrificed so much to see me here on this stage and I want the world to know how special she is. Thank you, Mom, I love you. I am grateful for God and the opportunities that have been given to me and that have made me stronger and more prepared for life. My friends, without you guys I wouldn't have made it to this stage. Thank you.

So indeed, this is a day to be grateful, for friends, --My friends, without you guys I wouldn't have made it to this stage - for family, for opportunities to grow, and for opportunities to fail and recover. I wish you all well wherever your future takes you, and I challenge you to use your skills, knowledge, and wisdom to create a better world for all those you encounter along the way. Once again, congratulations class of 2023, we did it. Thank you.