

Welcome Address delivered by Katrina Bayoneto at Loyola School
Commencement Exercises, May 29, 2009.

Good evening, Fr. Katsouros, Mr. Lyness, Mr. Sheehy and Members of the Board of Trustees, Dr. Bolton, Ms. Cupillari, Mr. Sullivan and Members of the Administration, Faculty, and Staff, Family, Friends, and Fellow Students.

Welcome to Loyola School's Commencement Exercises. It is an honor to stand here in front of all of you tonight at St. Ignatius Church. We are gathered here to send off Loyola's class of 2009.

Seated behind me, dressed in white, are your graduates at graduation. Men and women for others. They are religious, loving, committed to doing justice, academically excellent, and open to growth. But, they are so much more than that. Each individual is a leader in his or her own special way. Although some of us may have positions as Peer Leaders, Kairos Leaders, and Student Government, every member of the class of 2009 has demonstrated leadership qualities in their integrity, their quality of work, how they share their talents, and the ways they treat those around them. I know that we, as a grade, have left an impression on Loyola, on the underclassmen and the teachers. We will always be remembered, and not only for our awesome graffiti mural in the jugyard.

It is always difficult to describe the daily atmosphere of Loyola. During sophomore year theology with Mr. Palladino, we learned that the word “community” was always the correct answer to any question in that class. As Fr. Katsouros mentioned during his homily at the Baccalaureate mass, Loyola’s most definite strong point is the “community.” It is an amazingly unique experience that only students, administration, faculty, and staff will truly understand.

This community has helped me grow into the person I am today. I was extremely quiet and shy in elementary school, definitely not a social butterfly. Here I am four years later, Female Social Rep on student government and giving the welcome address in front of a packed church. If it were not for Loyola’s small community, I would not have felt the comfort and freedom to truly be myself. Loyola has encouraged us all to become confident men and women ready for the outside world.

It is hard to say good-bye to Loyola after four years. Unlike other schools, Loyola doesn’t start and stop at the first bell and dismissal. It continues on during after-school activities, it carries on through our friends that we spend time with, it becomes part of our weekends as we stick together to find innovative ways to have fun. Whether we like to admit it or not, we are a family, ’09 and the rest of the kids at Loyola.

We could not have made it this far without the help of our family and friends at home. It is your support and encouragement that these men and women have accomplished so much at Loyola. I know that my mom has been there every step of the way. Everyone present tonight can look back four years ago and see these men and women of '09 and notice the change in each of them. This change would not have been possible without your love and your positivity.

After four years of high school, it's over. No more A days, B days, day 1's 2's and 3's, signing out to lunch, Neofytos, City Market, assembly, mentor, Examen. That's it. In a matter of an hour or so, we will never have to sit in JUG again. I know that when I take exams and college and shout out "good luck, Danielle," no one will understand.

The class of 2009 will sadly end their high school journey tonight, but through the ups and downs of the four years, we have all found success. Even after a rough fourth quarter, all 52 of us have made it this far.

My fellow classmates, time flew by. I still remember being a nervous freshman as we forged through the school together divided by three sections. Each class throughout the four years leaves a mark on us. I loved the slope dance in honors math freshman year with Ms. Cerussi, sophomore year's chemistry classes with Mr. Joseph, theology with Fr. Curry in junior year, the all-girl Italian class with Tram, and everything in between. The faculty really guided us through our

journey and I know that all the graduates could pin several memories to each teacher.

Almost every day at Loyola, something memorable occurs. Although we may be overwhelmed with work, we pause to have a little fun: whether it's just talking in the library, singing along to a song in the commons, or ballin' without shoes on. From Camdens to jugyard dances, and the amazing Kairos retreat. The Loyola experience culminated with our loud chants down the stairs on the last day of class, "'09, '09!"

I'm going to let you all in on a little secret. I took advantage of my position on student government to arrange for "Forever Young" to be the last song played at prom. I wanted to incorporate the song into this speech. Then, on Wednesday evening during Baccalaureate Mass, another song also titled "Forever Young" was chosen to be the song of reflection toward the end of the mass. '09, I hope you take the time to listen to this song every once in a while in your future lives. I would love to take the time now to sing you the entire song, but to spare your ears, "So many adventures couldn't happen today, so many songs that we forgot to play, so many dreams swimming out in the blue, let them come true." These words reflect the universal experience of high school. We learn from our mistakes because there is always hope for a brighter future. No matter where the class of 2009 ends up in their lives, I hope that we all keep the memories of Loyola. These

memories will keep us forever young, even when we are wrinkly and lose our teeth. '09, I love each and every one of you. I hope you cherish your friendships and never let them fade away.

This year, we dedicated our yearbook to Mr. Andrew Donacik. He has been our math and science teacher and track and cross-country coach, but most importantly a cheerful friend. I can say that I have never come across a more kind and pure soul always ready to greet you with a smile and high five. I would like to begin the graduation ceremony by reciting a prayer with which Mr. Donacik begins each and every class. If you are familiar with the prayer, please recite it with me.

Spirit of God, we ask you to help orient all of our actions by your inspiration and to carry them out by your gracious assistance. So that every prayer and work of ours may always begin with you and through you be happily ended.

Saint Ignatius of Loyola

Pray for us