

Farewell Address delivered by Kevin Quaratino at Loyola School's Commencement Exercises, May 29, 2009

Graduation Speech – Farewell Address

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,

Before I start, I would like to thank all of you, for helping all of us get to this day. It is because of your kindness and support throughout our journey at Loyola, that we may end here on the altar of St. Ignatius. It is my great honor to speak before you tonight and for that, I'm not only thankful to the teachers but to the students as well. You have all given me an opportunity to reflect back on four years of friendships that I doubt any of us want to end. As I recalled many fond memories, I couldn't help but think back to a quote I heard at the beginning of the year. It goes "I know where I am going because of where I've been" and so I sat down and actually thought about all the places that the class of 2009 has been and how we all have matured so much as a result. Loyola has played a crucial part in our development and has set us on a path. We're no longer the children you sent to high school, but rather men and women entering the real world.

Despite all that we have accomplished however, it did take a lot to get here. I don't think any of us really measure time at Loyola in months or years, but rather experiences, and instances of laughter or times of trial. Looking back, it's difficult to believe how many memories we've all made together and to be honest, I can't believe our time is over. I remember Freshman orientation when we were with Ms. Ferran, she was going to break us up into our peer leader groups. So she gave each of us a piece of paper with the name of an animal on it and the idea was that people in the same group had the same animal on their paper. Ms. Ferran told us to spread out and look for other people in our group but instead of just telling them what animal we were, we had to identify ourselves by making the noise of that animal. So there we were the class of 2009, walking around the gymnasium barking like dogs and meowing like cats, and all of us secretly thinking "wow.....maybe this wasn't the right choice."

Three years later, I think we can all agree that it was one of the best decisions we've ever made. There's just been so much that has taken place and I'm glad I got to experience every bit of it with the wonderful people sitting behind me. We of course had our ups and downs, there's no getting around that, but I believe in the end, it's the ups we remember and it's the happy times that keep us going. It's remembering Christmas at Loyola and listening to Mr. Lyness read "The Gift of the Magi" before church or heading over to the Baseball fields in Central Park to support our knights. We'll always remember the loud Harumphs resonating from Father Curry's classroom or the numerous SECs written all over Will's notebooks, the soft good mornings from Jalma and Ms. Sullivan, Tims love of dancing to the song "Call on me," Ms. Babers signature phrase "It was the holy spirit," Andrews fatherly roles in every play and the way Dr. Meade manages to keep a monotone voice when delivering a humorous comment. The truth is there are so many memories to recall of both students and faculty, and although I can't list them all, I am most grateful for them as is everyone graduating tonight. I think its been a true blessing these last couple of years because although great distances may separate us from this school and separate us from each other, we will always carry the ones we love in our hearts.

And so tonight, we gather to celebrate a class that was caring and true, a group of students who always tried to do what was asked of them. I think that when people remember the class of 2009, they will recall a group of young men and women who truly did their best to embody leadership not only for the underclassmen but for each other as well. Beginning in our first year at Loyola, during that first spring break Ms. Cerussi traveled with a group of students to Austria and Germany, and they bonded over many nights of Gelato, listening to Pink's song "stupid girls" because it was the only music video on the television they could actually understand. Traveling to different countries is just one way Loyola helped us be open to growth. In Sophomore and Junior year, Ms. Baber took a group of students down to Georgia to the Ignatian Family Teach In, the majority from the class of 2009. We took part in a peaceful prayer service outside of Fort Benning because ones of its schools, the School of the Americas, was responsible for training the soldiers who carried out the El Salvadoran genocide. We walked around the entrance of the base with white crosses as a memorial for all those who died took place.

As a result, upon hearing about or participating in this trip we became more religious. This year, we recall how the Girls Varsity Basketball team made it to the GISAM finals at Hunter and with 15 seconds left on the clock, Kelsey managed to score 4 points that put them in the lead. Although we lost that game due to the other team scoring with 5 seconds left, it didn't matter because we were all so proud of them for never giving in. I can still see the tears of the lady knights as they hugged each other, but I can also see the packed bleachers filled with Loyola Students just standing and clapping. I remember Mr. Gregory made an observation the next day in philosophy, that although the other team had many supporters, most of them were parents, whereas the majority of Loyola supporters were students. Giving such support and displaying such pride for our friends, is there any doubt that the people sitting behind me are loving? The class of 2009 has also been on a service trip to Tennessee this year with Mr. Bludgus where they ultimately built a house. Attending school on Park Avenue and being blessed with so many things in life, sometimes it's easy to forget the people out there who don't even have a home to go to. Subsequently, these students gave up their spring break for a week of hard labor and service. I think this illustrates how the class of 2009 is committed to doing justice. Finally, we have one profile of the grad at grad left, academically excellent, and so I got to thinking if all trips have in essence a pedagogical purpose, than how do I decide which trip centers around being academically excellent more than the others. And then it came to me when I remembered one of the newest mothers in the Loyola community, Ms. Meyers. Our A.P. bio teacher took us to a DNA lab in December where we conducted an actual scientific procedure known as gel electrophoresis. Using the equipment you see on CSI we actually learned a lot. So it is safe to say the class of 2009 is academically excellent.

Now, returning to the present time, is there any doubt that the students on this altar are some of the most talented and exceptional people I've ever met. Such high school careers marked by intellect and a fare share of heart may not spell out our futures, but they definitely imply that great things are ahead of us as long as we are willing to use all the gifts we have.

Father Pedro Arrupe, the 28th Father General of the Society of Jesus once said "It is the job of the Jesuit student to humanize the world" and if we have learned anything in

these last couple of years, it's that the world can be a most inhumane place. Injustice strickens this earth, and sometimes its easy to lose hope and maybe even say "Why bother." This is not the attitude of the class of 2009, everyone graduating tonight is capable of amazing things and I have no doubt that if we truly want to, we can set things in motion that will change life for the better. It's funny because we have traveled the world, served the poor, and aced our report cards, but right now, saying "Good bye" seems harder than all of that but as all things come to pass in life, so too must our time with each other. Class of 2009, my good friends, it has been wonderful growing up with all of you these last four years but the time has come now to move on so in the words of our senior mural " Go forth and set the world ablaze." Thank you.