

Delivered by Ms. Yesenia Ferran at Loyola's Academic Convocation, Sept. 11, 2009

Good afternoon and welcome. I would like to thank Mr. Lyness for inviting me to address the school on such an important day. Today marks a brand new academic year for all of us gathered here. I must confess: the first day back always makes me nervous. Since I was a little girl, I was nervous on the first day of school and these feelings have not changed much. I would like to share some first day experiences.

September '88, Yesenia Ferrán entered Loyola School for the first time as a student. She was a freshman about to encounter a whole new world. She was 13 and entered the gymnasium. This young lady recognized some faces, after all, her brother was a senior at the School, but, she was still nervous. Then Fr. Prior greeted her by name and assigned her seat in the bleachers and she knew she was in the right place. Although the nerves were still there and she was filled with the anxiety of not knowing what to expect, she suddenly felt at home.

September '91, Yesenia Ferrán was 16 years old and was still a little nervous. She knew she was in the perfect place to start her senior year. She attended the Mass of the Holy Spirit and knew her last year was about to begin. Many choices needed to be made this year. Little did she know that these choices would affect the rest of her life.

September '98, Yesenia Ferrán was 23 years old and found herself at Loyola School again being greeted by Fr. Prior. This greeting was not in the gymnasium it was during Faculty Orientation. The nerves were there, but she knew she was in the right place, and again, she was at home. Another day filled with choices and opportunities that filled Yesenia with excitement. She was extremely eager to enter the classroom, get to know her colleagues and students. These thoughts were racing through her mind while orientation was going on. Suddenly, her daydreams of an amazing year froze when Fr. Prior asked her, "What does Ex Fide Fortis mean?" She could not remember, the nerves kicked in and Jeff Alpi was seated next to her and answered the question.

Yesenia was grateful, yet embarrassed that after so many years she had forgotten Ex Fide Fortis. Strength through Faith.

September 2009, Yesenia Ferrán is addressing the school on this glorious day. Her nerves are still there, but she remembers that she is home. She is about to face the many challenges of a new academic year and she remembers EX FIDE FORTIS.

I shared this time line with you as an expression of the importance of the choices we make every day. I chose to attend Loyola School; I chose to make the most of my experience at Loyola School; I chose to use every opportunity given to me while I was a student. My choices as a Loyola student guided me throughout my college experiences and eventually my career. I made the choice to take the amazing opportunity to teach at Loyola School. Today marks the beginning of my 12th year teaching Spanish at Loyola School and each day I am grateful to be surrounded by the outstanding talents of our faculty. I continue to grow professionally and learn from my peers. I value the gifts of strength, faith, courage, and opportunity that Loyola School has given me.

These gifts that I have received over the years and continue to receive were not just handed over to me. It took making the decision to accept these treasures. I cherish each day I see each of you faced with the choices and opportunities you have here at Loyola School. I encourage you to see each day as a choice. I challenge you to take charge of your education and community life and be the young men and women that you are all capable of being. I ask you to set goals for yourselves, reach these goals on a day to day basis.

This first day is loaded with many experiences that range from friendships to academics. It's the only day in the school year that everything is fresh. This is the day when you could make the decision on how you want this year to be. What are your goals?

How active do you plan to be in the community? How will you react when things may not be as you expected them to be? What will you do when you have a course that you find difficult?

Goal setting is not just for you the student body, it's for all of us present today. My focus for this year is to be healthy. I strongly feel that we let stress take over and forget about the beauty of today and each day. I give thanks for today because it is a new start. The past stays in the past. We cannot forget the lessons learned from our experiences, but we must use them to move forward with more strength and faith. Today I make a promise to myself that I will face my challenges without letting myself get lost in the stress. I promise to take my experiences as a lesson learned and move forward with the power to succeed. I give thanks everyday because each day I know I am learning how to achieve my goal and as I keep my promise to myself; I know that each day I am stronger and able to face new challenges.

I challenge myself to give 100% each day towards being the best person both personally and professionally. Challenges and difficulties will exist, but all I could do is give my all to keeping my promise.

I ask you to set goals for yourselves, promise yourselves that you will work on these goals day by day and give it your full commitment.

Enjoy each day at Loyola. Treasure your experiences at Loyola both the most difficult times and the best of times. Learn from your experiences and use that knowledge to achieve the goals you set for yourselves.

Thank you for accepting this challenge. Blessings to all of you for a successful year. May this year bring you the experiences that you too can treasure for the rest of your lives.