

Father Tony, Father Chris, Mrs. Nearhood, members of the Education Commission, Mrs. Reith, Mr. Straub, Ms. Kanczak, teachers, parents, relatives, friends, and classmates, it is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the Commencement ceremony for the graduating class of 2010.

Let's flash back to August 2006. Fergie's "London Bridge" is at the top of the charts, MySpace is the number-one social networking site, and we, the class of 2010 have just begun our first day of high school. It's weird to think how much can change in just four years. Fergie has quit her solo career, MySpace is practically nonexistent, and we are no longer the nervous fourteen-year-olds that sat in this same gymnasium for freshman orientation. Through the care and instruction of the St. Peter's faculty and through the influences of our own peers, we have grown and matured into adults, ready to make our way in the world.

The influence of the St. Peter's teachers on our lives has been immense, even if we don't realize it. First, consider these statistics. Over the past four years, we have spent a grand total of 4,320 hours in the classroom. That's twenty-five weeks and five days. We spent an addition sixty days doing nothing by homework. With the amount of time put into going to class and doing schoolwork, it's almost impossible for the teachers not to have influenced our lives. These educators have helped to shape our ideas of what we want for our futures. Mr. Bernath's classes

inspire doctors, while Mrs. Groshong's inspire inventors and mad scientists. The English department has influenced the way we write and speak, perhaps one of the most important influences of all. I know of some people who never again used the word "ain't" once Mrs. Castle was through with them. The teachers have done more than inspire us, though. They've taught us essential life lessons, such as the importance of discipline, the value of hard work, and why the JFK assassination was clearly a collaboration of the CIA, the KGB, the American Mafia, and Lyndon B. Johnson. On behalf of my entire class, I would like to thank the teachers for all they've done for us.

The influence of our peers has been just as important as the influence of the faculty, because high school is not just about preparing for our future academically, but also about learning to live and work productively with people our own age. When I entered St. Peter's four years ago, I was a strange to almost everyone. Now, though, I can honestly say that these are some of my closest friends. At first, we acted the way you would expect teenagers to act. We formed distinct, separate groups of friends and remained within the bounds of these comfort zones. However, the small class size at St. Peter's does not allow for this kind of behavior for long. We eventually learned what I think is one of the most important lessons of our high school career: you can't let first impressions, preconceived notions, or fears of rejection keep you from reaching out to people. If

you do, you will miss out on so much. Some of my best friends are the ones I made during my junior and senior years, and this never would have happened if I had listened to my fears or my ninth grade prejudices.

St. Peter's also taught us to appreciate the value of a kind heart. Before I came here, I would never have thought it possible for a gentle, compassionate spirit to make a bigger impression than a violent one. Here, though, I have witnessed evidence to back up the Persian proverb, "With a sweet tongue and kindness, you can drag an elephant by his hair." We as a class have grown to revere kindness and honesty above all other personality traits because we have felt their power in our lives.

Finally, I would like to thank all the parents here today. Without your love and support, none of us would have made it this far.

Though high school is a difficult time for everyone, St. Peter's was probably one of the best places we could have experienced it. We have grown so much in the past four years and I think all the changes have been for the better. There is a quote by the author Pearl Buck that says, "Growth itself contains the germ of happiness." If we continue to grow the way we have during high school, we will be living lives rich with contentment.

Thank you.