

Lia Brunetti

Valedictorian Speech 2011

Father Tony, Father Tom, Mr. Mulherin, members of the School Commission, Mrs. Reith, Mr. Straub, Ms. Kanczak, teachers, parents, relatives, friends, and classmates – there are only three parts to this speech, so you'll know when I'm getting close to the end.

First, thank you. Thank you to all the parents, grandparents, relatives, teachers, and classmates who have made each of us who we are today. Parents, you've put up with us through our stress about Mr. Mulherin's insane tests, were proud of us when the scoreboard said you shouldn't have been, and consoled us through heartbreak. Your quiet support is what we have always, and what we will always need. Teachers, don't worry, we're leaving, but we're going to miss you. The amount of guidance and wisdom that you have imparted to us will follow us for the rest of our lives. Though we never wanted to admit it, you were always right, but you let us figure that out on our own. Your willingness to listen and your ability to refrain from judging is astounding and your dedication is an inspiration and example for us all. And now, to my class. Everyone in the audience, take a good, long look at these people because they are some of the strongest, most passionate, and most caring people I have ever met. And they've

never failed me. My best friends sit out there, my inspiration sits out there, and my heart sits out there.

Throughout our lives we've always been taught to have goals and a path to follow. Having a plan is practical and smart, but those plans don't always work out. Tragedy strikes, miracles happen, and dimensions that we never imagined are added onto us. No one understands why things happen and sometimes it is out of our control, but what we have experienced has sculpted us into who we are. We have to be willing to take a detour or the scenic route. We must learn from our mistakes, but we must also learn not to regret. Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel said, "We need to remember, not to remain in the past, but because it must illuminate our present". We will remember all the twists and turns, and that is why we are who we are. And sometimes it is each of us who chooses to stray from the path and it *is* in our control. We are strong people and we have the courage to get lost and the perseverance to find our way back. We must be brave enough to stray from the constant expectations and to do things because *we* want to, not because someone told us to. If you happen to be walking one day and see a crunchy leaf and have the overwhelming urge to step on it, do it – don't let the pressures of society stop you from being truly happy.

My last point is that people and our relationships with them are most important. At this point, we're almost high school graduates and our lives are going to change drastically. The people we've seen every day will no longer be around, and we'll lose touch. And that's okay. There will be those few that we still talk to every once in a while, and we need to hold onto those relationships, but just because some fade doesn't mean that they don't matter. There's the quote, "People will forget what you said, they'll forget what you did, but they'll never forget how you made them feel". Nothing could be more true. Society doesn't follow this idea, but I do. We need to remember to see, not just to look, and to listen, not just to hear. I believe that our class has done this and I will remember all of you for it. I have a philosophy that was inadvertently inspired by my mom, and that is to always love. That is what gives you grace and gives you the strength to hold on. My wish for all of you is to be at peace with your relationships – be it with friends, parents, siblings, or a classmate, I wish you all peace.

I told you that I only had three points, so I'm finished. Thank you again to everyone who has supported us throughout our lives. And to my class, all of you are truly amazing people. I would not be who I am without you and I'm so glad

that you've been part of my path. I wish you all an abundance of peace and happiness and I cannot wait to see what you accomplish in the future.