

Student Lasallian Commencement Address
May 16, 2004
Presented by Dennis M. Lynch

Good morning Members of the Board of Trustees, Brother James, honored guests, faculty, staff, fellow graduates, parents, family, and friends.

Two weeks ago I went to Sunday night Mass here at Lewis for the last time as an undergraduate student. As I sat there, I could not help but think back to my first weekend here at Lewis when I went to Sunday mass for the first time at Sancta Alberta. I recalled those first days as if they were yesterday . . . moving in, attending my first classes, and playing volleyball in the sandpit by Fitzpatrick Hall. I thought as well about the summer before I came to Lewis. You see, most of my friends from high school went to state schools. Shortly before we all left to go off to college, one of my friend's parents asked me why I chose to go to a Catholic school. Today, I realize more than ever that what I wanted was to attend a college where I would be treated like an individual, not like a number. And that is just what we have all gotten here at Lewis University.

Through the small, community based atmosphere, we have been able to develop as individuals and appreciate the contributions of the diverse community that exists on our campus. We have been able to get to know each other as well as get to know our professors, faculty and staff on a personal level. This small community has made it easier for our professors to know us on a first name basis and to take a personal interest in our education.

But now our undergraduate college days are over. Now we are called to use what we have learned here for the benefit of others. As we venture forth to the next chapter of our lives, we must realize that what we have learned and experienced here at Lewis is not just what we have been tested on, it is not just history or nursing or criminal justice or business or aviation, but it is also the Catholic and Lasallian values that have been instilled in us here at Lewis.

Through the legacy of St. John Baptist de la Salle, Lewis has provided us with the opportunity to learn what we will truly need to know, the Mission values of justice, knowledge, fidelity, wisdom and association. Now, as graduates we take these values into our lives to benefit others. You see, our education is just a beginning. What many of us do not even realize is that we are truly blessed to have been able to receive a college education. Now, that blessing also becomes an obligation, an obligation to use what we have learned in the service of others.

So what, then, are we to do? Tomorrow when we enter the world as graduates, how do we use our gifts? In the 1960s, President Kennedy told Americans that “we have the power to make this the greatest generation in the history of the world, or, the last.”

Today, our obligation is no less – to make this the greatest generation. The thing is, it is even easier for us now than it was back then. We have the advantages of expanded technology, increased communications, globalization, an appreciation for diversity, and a values-based education that has truly prepared us to meet the challenges of the 21st century.