

Student Lasallian Commencement Address
December 19, 2004
Presented by Ayanna A. Collins

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

Picture this, a swarm of people, none of whom looked familiar. They were all moving things in and out of cars, trucks and vans. Many had tear-filled eyes, and even more showed anxiety on

On top of that, I began to find myself getting acquainted with the Brothers and other people that exemplified their faith. I became curious to know, what motivated these people? How could the Brothers commit their lives to poverty, and even celibacy, for the sake of others? What did it mean to believe in something so strongly that I would willingly give of myself for others, and actually enjoy it?! As I began to put all the pieces together, I began to see the pattern of Faith in Action. All of these people I had observed—whether they were the Brothers, my professors, my coaches, or my fellow classmates—were people that not only believed in God, but they also believed they were capable of changing the world through His help.

Due to the nature of our society, it is easy for us to become blind to injustices. It is also tempting for us to think that our limited contribution cannot make a difference. But, I agree with Margaret Mead, who said, “Never believe that a few caring people can’t change the world. For, indeed, that’s all we ever have.” In whatever you do, and in whatever job, city, and neighborhood you find your future, let it be one that is changed by your presence. Whether it is the courtroom or the corner office, the hospital bed working with patients, or the classroom working with lesson plans, I urge you to take someone’s world a better place.

As you close this chapter of your life, hope that you will put your faith into action. I hope that you will continue in the Lasallian tradition of promoting justice for the underprivileged and underrepresented in our society. There is an ancient quote that simply states, “It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.” I hope that this will be said of me, of you, and of this generation—that we choose to light candles, instead of merely recognizing social problems and merely part of the solution. My prayer for all of us is that we will light our candles, and let God’s presence be the fuel to sustain our light as we go forward.

In closing, I exhort you, as M.K. Gandhi said, to become the change you wish to see in the world! Our features are certain, as few things in life ever are. But with God’s help, I am sure that we will overcome whatever challenges we face. My prayer for all of you is that you will ignite your candles, and refuse to be conquered by the darkness. God bless and Congratulations!