Provost Commencement Address
J. J. Sanford

Your Excellency, Most Reverend Bishop Edward J. Burns; your Excellency, Most Reverend Gregory Kelly; Chairman Dr. Thomas Zellers; Distinguished alumna Miriem Benselah-Chaqroun; Distinguished alumnus Thomas Nealon; Board of Trustees Members; Acting President Dr. John Plotts; University Chaplain Fr. Thomas More Barba, OP; Rome Chaplain Monsignor Thomas Fucinaro, Abbot Peter Verhalen, OCist; Rector Father James Swift; other priests and religious; my fellow faculty members, administrators, and staff of the University of Dallas; parents, grandparents, friends and other relatives; and last, but certainly not least, the graduating class of 2018; it is truly a delight to stand before you this glorious morning.

This is a day set aside to celebrate your rite of passage from degree seekers to degree recipients. But, it is far more than that, for, in celebrating your accomplishments, we are given an opportunity to reflect on who we are as an institution of higher learning. The University of Dallas as a whole—in its faculty, students, administration, staff, board, alumni, benefactors and friends—is a community of learners. Our purpose is to cultivate truth, wisdom and the other virtues in our students. That is why we exist. We are a university, not a multi-
versity, because we are organized around the conviction that the universe is ordered from one source, that it is a cosmos. That source is divine and personal and worthy of our praise. As a Catholic university we recognize that all wisdom and truth begins and ends with the Creator who loves us, and we have at our disposal the long tradition of learning, a tradition that draws from non-Christian as well as Christian sources in weaving together a coherent whole that we call the Catholic intellectual tradition. That tradition is no staid and stodgy thing. It is living, a tree with roots and a clear pattern of growth. Our tradition is a source of creativity, ingenuity, and new discovery, as well as continuity and rootedness. It finds its way into every degree program at the University, undergraduate and graduate, liberal and professional. It has been essential to your formation whether you found your home here in Constantin, Gupta, Braniff or Neuhoff; and it will continue to guide you along your various career paths.

There are goals that apply to every career, goals that apply to every facet of your lives. You can find these goals emblazoned across the top of the seal affixed above and behind me on UD’s most significant landmark and the symbol of its educational aspirations, the Tower. The Tower beckons and radiates, and thus is a metaphor for the souls of our students who are enkindled and enlightened. Veritatem, Justitiam Diligite: These are the words surrounding the top of the University of Dallas seal, and comprise UD’s motto. These are words meant to
encapsulate the point and purpose of your education. These are words to guide you. Love Truth. Love Justice. The first thing to notice is that diligite, the Latin word for “love” and “seek diligently”, is a command. Diligently seeking, loving, is not merely a matter of feeling. Feelings do not respond immediately to command. Your will does. The good news upon which all education is predicated is that we are shapeable, we can be guided, we can be commanded. We have wills that can be directed, redirected, reoriented. In your life, no doubt, you will have many opportunities to take stock of the orientation of your will. Are you seeking what you ought? What ought you to seek? The answer is not elusive: your alma mater commands you to love and seek diligently truth and justice.

Love truth.

What is truth? There is much to commend with respect to our age of technological innovations, but it would be a mistake to think our technologies represent us. One of the negative implications of this digital age is that we can come to think that knowledge is digitizable, seamlessly transferable into any variety of so-called “smart” devices, and therefore that knowledge is cheap. If knowing is a matter of absorbing information, and sharing knowledge a matter of transferring information to another, then we really do have reason to fear our machines will surpass us.

One thing I hope you’ve learned is that knowledge is not information. There are two basic reasons why knowledge is not information. The first is that information
is always a matter of packaging things in byte size bits. But things are not their packaging. Each thing has a depth, a beauty, a being, a goodness, that reaches far deeper than what can be collected and contained about it. So, the first reason why knowledge is not information is that knowledge is of things as they really are. The second reason why knowledge is not information is that information can be contained by any old thing—your computer, your phone, your calculator, even those archaic things we call books. But knowledge is always the achievement of a person. Knowledge is always a personal encounter between a knower and a thing. Things measure us, revealing to us, if we listen attentively to them, their being. Learning to do this well is a matter of developing the habit of mind, the intellectual virtue, that is a part of wisdom.

Your teachers have been masters of the art of directing your intellect towards those beings most worthy of your attention. Like Plato taught, your teachers too know that the whole of your own being must be oriented rightly, and that is a matter of fostering in you those perfections of self that we call the moral virtues. Unlike owls, we cannot turn our heads to see behind us; instead, like the freed prisoner in Plato’s cave analogy, we have to turn and walk towards the light. It is in that light that you encounter things as they are. Those encounters with the truths of things will, if you commit yourself to continued exploration, lead you to deeper encounters with Him, the One Who is the source of all truths.
Love justice

We want you to be successful. You want you to be successful. Please remember—as you leave us to go out and do great and glorious things (and make no mistake that you have an obligation to do great and glorious things) that being a successful and independent individual is still a very long way from being truly successful. We can become an obstacle to our own success by imagining ourselves to be independent agents responsible for that success, more or less self-made individuals who are free to do as we want. Your nature is not that of a solitary person; you are not most yourself when alone. You came into this world radically dependent upon your parents. Your mother carried you to term and nursed you. Your father fed you with a spoon. Your parents changed your soiled clothing and held your hand as you learned to walk. They, and the many others they invited into your life as helpmates in raising you, have indeed brought you to a point where you can take care of yourself. But that does not make you a self-sufficient individual. The mark of real maturity is acknowledging your radical dependency on others and delighting in their relation to you.

No being can flourish except by fully being the sort of being it is. If you are to flourish, if you are to be truly successful, then you can only do so by acknowledging your dependency on others and caring for those who are dependent on you, especially the most vulnerable. We need, in other words, to practice
especially and above all those social virtues of what Alasdair MacIntyre calls “acknowledged dependency,” and foremost among those is the virtue of misericordiae, of compassionate charity, by which we not only suffer with those who suffer, but also are compelled to relieve their suffering. That is where you will learn to obey the command to love and seek diligently justice. Justice is most perfected in charity.

Veritatem, justitiam diligite. The command the University of Dallas issues to all its sons and daughters is not a diversion from your pursuit of a life well-lived, it is rather a guide to the achievement of your life-quest. Since knowledge is a personal encounter with the truth of things, you become more yourself the more you cultivate knowledge in pursuit of wisdom. Since putting your life at the service of others is a fulfilment of your dependent rational nature, you become more yourself the more you cultivate justice. We want you to be happy, and the path to happiness is the love and pursuit of truth and justice. We also hope you want strive to do great and glorious things, to cultivate the virtue of magnanimity. If so, you ought to want to be humble.

How is humility compatible with striving after great and glorious things? These virtues are not only compatible, but also interdependent. You cannot have one without the other. How can that be? Well, the essence of humility is acknowledging your gifts precisely as gifts, and you can only do that by giving
credit to the Giver of all Gifts. With humility one glorifies God as the Gift-Giver, and just as in the parable of the talents, God is pleased when we use our gifts, he is most pleased when we use our gifts especially well. With magnanimity, one strives to do great and glorious things that build up the Kingdom, thereby pleasing the King through putting to use those talents he bestowed on you. So practice genuine magnanimity so that you might thereby be truly humble. Be humble, that you might be magnificent in the way you live and in the great and glorious things you do. In living magnanimously, you will love truth and justice well, becoming who you are called to be. We are eager to see you come into your own and set this world ablaze with your great and good life and works. Let us commence.
Dexter Freeman, for the National Alumni Board

It is truly an honor to stand before you today. As I suspect that you will not do anything to sabotage the next 20 minutes, I officially welcome you to the University of Dallas Alumni family. I implore that you do not take this distinction lightly. You are now part of a family (more formally an Alumni Community) that is comprised of more than 30,000 fellow graduates around the globe. We have alumni representation from start-ups to Fortune 500 organizations. We have alumni that direct spheres of influence from classrooms to boardrooms. And more importantly, we are welcoming a new generation of alumni in YOU!

So what does it mean to be an alumnus of the University of Dallas? Simply put – you have spent the past 2, 3, 4…5 or 6 years developing intellectual and moral virtues, seeking wisdom and studying truths. Now it is time for you to live and exude such truths. The pursuit of wisdom will never yield. However, now as you are pursing wisdom – you must also be the salt and light in what can sometimes seem like a tasteless and dark world. It is an honor, a privilege, and a responsibility to be an alumnus of the University of Dallas.

Many people believed in YOU, many people supported YOU and many people encouraged YOU through your journey that led you here today. Some of those people are sitting here. Some of those people you will never know – similar to the merciful and graceful hand of God that leads us,
guides us and protects us. Know that YOU are not in this journey alone.

And as it is a privilege to be an alumnus of the University of Dallas, it too is a privilege to be able to give back to a university that has done so much (knowingly or unknowingly) for you.

I mentioned to not take this distinction lightly. I pray that each of you can come to understand the honor that has been bestowed upon you. I pray that your understanding moves you to action. I pray that such action leads to a lifelong legacy for the University of Dallas and for each of those that bless these halls.

Please know – that as I refer to action, your capacity for action will change over time. The amount you are able to give or the time that you are able to volunteer may seem insignificant from your perspective today. However, that is as far from the truth as the east is from the west. Every cent...every cent and every second counts. Your gift goes towards touching the heart of someone and impacting them in such a way that breaks down walls of insecurities and doubts. Your gift inspires beyond success; it inspires the desire for impact.

The National Alumni Board of the University of Dallas offers you our most sincere and heartfelt congratulations on your great achievement. I encourage you to go forth my UD brothers and sisters. Be an impact in this world. Be not afraid to take risks. Be not afraid to ask for help. Be not afraid to question. Go forth and be the salt and light that we need, that
those who are coming up behind you long for. Go forth knowing – you are not in this alone.

Thank you.
Tom Zellers, for the Board of Trustees

“Bishop Burns, fellow Trustees, administrators, members of the faculty and staff, parents and family members of the graduates, friends, and graduates of the Braniff Graduate School, the Satish & Yasmin Gupta College of Business, the Ann & Joe O. Neuhoff School of Ministry, and Constantin College—greetings on behalf of the Board of Trustees of the University of Dallas to each and every one of you.

And to all of the graduates, I offer on behalf of my fellow trustees congratulations on the successful completion of your studies and the award of your UD degrees.

These commencement exercises mark an important transition for each of you who are graduating today, and I want to encourage you, as you leave UD, to be confident that the education you received here will serve you superbly well in whatever future endeavor you pursue. I hope that you will continue to be involved at the University of Dallas to share with your alma mater the rich fruits of the learning that she provided you, and to ensure that such learning will be continued for future generations of students.
In the meantime, I wish you fulfillment in whatever vocation you choose, success in your work, enduring friendships, and God's blessing on everything you do.”

The Acting President of the University of Dallas, Dr. John Plotts, will now offer greetings and introduce today’s Honorary Degree Recipients and Commencement Speakers.”
Miriem Bensalah Chaqroun Commencement Address

Thank you very much Acting President Plotts I appreciate your kind words.

Congratulations to each of you on this special occasion. Your graduation is the product of long hours of hard work, study – and perhaps a bit of “Rest and Relaxation” sprinkled in for good measure.

Acting President Plotts

Your Excellency, Bishop Burns,

Dr. Zellers, Trustees of the Board,

Provost Sanford, Deans and University Faculty,

UD Doctorate, Graduate and Undergraduate classes, Family members, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning!

President Plotts, and Dean Landry, thank you for giving me this distinguished opportunity to speak to such an august gathering.

I would like to acknowledge Satish and Yasmin Gupta in their absence. The generosity they shared with this university for endowing the business school is enriching the lives of students from around the world.

We share a common milestone – it is here on this campus of UD that we both found our life partners! A husband and a degree: Not a bad deal.

They are true role models of an immigrant success story that the US embraces and welcomes!

It is with deep appreciation and humility that I accept the great honor, which you gave me today, the Doctor Honoris Causa of the University of Dallas.
Graduates,

When I came to Dallas the first day as a foreign student it was far beyond my imagination that I would return here one day to be honored by my alma mater with this distinguished recognition. It is far beyond what I dreamed possible for myself when I left here as a new graduate - just as each of you are today.

Of course, now I will need new business cards and an update to my resume!

It seems such a short time ago that I was sitting where you are, on a day much like today. Jamal, my husband and I, graduated with MBA's in International Management and Finance. My mind was spinning with thoughts of the future – thinking of the challenges and opportunities that lay before me.

Today, you join me in the ranks of alumni – I am confident that the education you have received has prepared you for success and taught you how to navigate in a fast-growing business world. Your education and determination are the tools for achievement. The most beautiful thing about learning is that nobody can take that away from you. Your wealth today is yourselves!

I was fortunate to be born into a privileged family, but I learned quickly that with privilege comes responsibility. As from Luke 12:48: “To whom much is given, much will be required.”

I am the eldest in a family of four brother and sisters. In my time, successful women were at best, engineers, doctors, lawyers, and a very few, entrepreneurs.

My father, a self-made businessman, was a visionary and always ahead of the curve.
He told me “you have the DNA of an entrepreneur and a leader. Being a woman is not a fatality. It is an opportunity. So, go get the best education in business; the family business will need you.”

His encouragement set the stage for an educational journey that first took me to Paris where I completed my undergraduate degrees, after which, I made my way here to Texas.

University of Dallas provided me the chance to see the world through a different lens. Armed with new academic and technical skills as in the capstone with Professor Bruce Evans (who I salute).

I was exposed to three new factors that changed my approach to life and business:

- **First**, scale matters. Everything is bigger in Texas! It showed me how small our family business was!
  
  More importantly, it showed me how big it could become!

- **Second**, I learned what it meant to be global, an emerging concept in the 1980s. It expanded my understanding of businesses and opportunities.

  The sky is the limit to your potential. The only thing stopping you, is you!

- **Finally**, values transcend race, religion and culture. Choosing to operate with clear core values gave me the confidence to succeed in a diverse business environment. “Authenticity” is more powerful than “stereotypes.”
Young people that I mentor always ask me my recipe for success. My answer is always, there is none. But, here is what life has taught me:

1. **Surround yourself with role models and people who believe in you**

- **One of my role models was my father.** He taught me: never compromise my values or self-respect.
  He held himself and others to the expectation of honesty in business and in his everyday interactions with others. Truth-based interactions allowed him to be as transparent as the bottled water he produced.

- **Another role model is my mother**; she taught me how to keep the faith, to be patient and strong.
  She instilled in me the importance of tradition and family.

  She gave me the legacy of women’s strength. (Mother’s Day)

- **My other role model, my life partner, Jamal,** a successful businessman on his own, with his global holding company working in 27 countries and more than 7,000 employees worldwide, he is my unconditional supporter, my balance.

  I am blessed to have a soulmate with whom I share unwavering trust and respect. His selfless support of our shared goals, values and dedication to family allowed me to become the woman I am today.

  Merci Jamal.

The other things that life taught me ...
2. Work hard and think long term

- The journey is long, and success comes from hard work. Know your starting point and where you want to go. There will be difficult times - we all face them - successful people conquer them! If you fall, get up and start over! As Nelson Mandela, Madiba to Africans, said: “I Never Lose, I Either Win or Learn”

Third....

3. Trust, ethics, and self-knowledge are essential:

- Trust yourself, trust your team and trust your business partners. Trust is key in a global world. It’s how business succeeds.
- Be ethical because your integrity matters, your reputation is your best reference in business. Never compromise yourself or your beliefs.
- Know yourself but always respect others. Build an environment of global understanding and a respect for the culture of others.

The future belongs to you and is for you to write.

You hold the power to make a difference.

You hold the power to realize your dreams because....

YOU ARE THE SHAPERS OF THE GLOBAL TOMORROW.

Congratulations on your graduation.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
Mr. Tom Nealon Commencement Address

Thank you.

Dr. Zeller, Bishop Burns, members of our Board of Trustees, and to our incredible Faculty and our Administration, thank you for this honor, and thank you for the privilege of speaking today.

And to our special guests; to the Parents, and Grandparents, to the Husbands and Wives, to the family members, and to the special friends that are here.

I think I know how proud you are today. Just yesterday our family attended the graduation of our oldest daughter. And just like you we were bursting with pride… And just like you… I was hoping, so earnestly… that the Commencement Speaker would be very… very brief!

Your Graduate has completed a course of study that is incredibly rigorous… and one of the most unique in the country.

I think it’s interesting that at 60 years old, the University of Dallas is still considered a relatively young university in the world of academia. And in that short time… UD has achieved an incredible reputation for excellence.
This is the youngest university to be granted a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa, which is the oldest and most prestigious honors organization in the U.S.

And the Gupta College of Business has achieved an accreditation that is earned by less than 5% of business schools world-wide.

UD has also produced 42 Fulbright Scholars in our 60 year history, again, among the most of any university.

So yes, you should be very proud of your graduate. They worked hard, and this wasn’t an easy journey!

And now… I’d like to speak directly to our Graduates…

First off, congratulations to each of you. I sat where you’re sitting, quite a while ago I guess… and I know it wasn’t easy. And I know it wasn’t always a ton of fun. But I also know, and I hope that you know, how special… and how unique… and how precious your time at UD has been.

I’m a pretty big reader and student of history, and as I was preparing for this, I thought of a comment that Winston Churchill made as he was giving the eulogy for one of his most ardent opponents in Parliament. It’s a great quote and it makes me laugh every time I think of it. So he started the eulogy by saying, “He was a humble man, and he had much to be humble about.” That’s a bit how I feel now, standing here, talking to each of you.
Having said that, though, I do have a few thoughts that I’d like to share with you. And these are very much from the heart.

First, I want to share with you how I think about Leadership.

And obviously, my lessons have been drawn largely from my experience in business, and largely from my experiences at Southwest.

But just to be clear, I’m not talking about Leadership just in the context of business, though it certainly applies there as well. I think the same principles apply in Government, Academia, the Arts, the Military, Social Services, Ministry… really I think they apply in any area or discipline.

You know, there are probably more books on Leadership than on any other topic. And they’re generally pretty boring… And I can promise you… I haven’t read them.

So these are my thoughts… from my experiences… and you might agree with them… or you might not, which is absolutely fine. UD has trained you well in the art of critical thinking, so this could be very interesting…
So I want to challenge you to think about “sometime in the future what type of Leader do I want to be?”

And I think that begins to bleed into the broader question of “what type of person do I want to be?”

And for me… the way I think about it is pretty simple. In fact, it may be too simple, which is why it works for me. I like to keep things simple.

For me, there are five things… really, 5 behaviors… that I think are at the core of Leadership, and I call them “The Leadership Mysteries”, and I think you’ll understand why I call them that in a few minutes. So.. there are five of them, and I’ll quickly share them.

**The first Leadership Mystery is HUMILITY.**

It means that you really listen to the thoughts and ideas of others.

It means that you know you don’t have all the answers.

It means that you’re aware that you can learn from someone else.

It means that you can say “I’m sorry, I was wrong”.

It’s the opposite of arrogance. I’ve never met anyone who wants to work with or for an arrogant boss.
The second Leadership Mystery is LOVE OF PEOPLE

People need to know that you care about them. Not just about their work… or what they can do for you… but about them as a person. It’s about the Golden Rule… treating People with respect, treating them how you want to be treated.

The third Leadership Mystery is COURAGE

Being a leader takes courage.

There will be hard days, and there will be tough decisions… and there will be things that you wish you could hand off to someone else. But the most difficult things can’t be handed off to others. Being a leader takes courage.

The fourth Leadership Mystery is PERSEVERENCE

When you become a Leader, for the first few minutes, it’s an honor. After that… you’ve accepted responsibility. And meaningful things don’t typically happen overnight. There will be problems… and there will be failures. But Leaders have to have the courage to persevere.

And the last Leadership Mystery is PATIENCE

It’s one thing to persevere, but it’s another thing altogether to persevere with patience… and with a calm steady hand. Leaders need to give others the grace of patience. And Leaders need to give others the confidence of a patient, steady hand.
So when I think about how I want to lead… and how I try to lead… and by the way, I have been known to come up short on occasion… I think about

**HUMILITY / LOVE OF PEOPLE / COURAGE / PERSEVERENCE / PATIENCE**

To me… the fundamental behaviors of Leadership are really as simple as this.

(See how much time I just saved you, you don’t need to read all of those books on Leadership now!)

**Which leads into my second and final thought…**

Never… never… be afraid to take your faith, and your values, and what that you believe… into your professional environment.

Just to be clear, I’m not talking about being over the top and behaving like a “Holier than Thou” type of person. I’m not into that at all.

And I’m not talking about making the workplace an awkward or uncomfortable place.

But it’s not impossible to intertwine your faith with your professional life. In fact I think it’s really important that you do.
I want to let you in on a little secret… and it’s the secret of how I came up the Leadership Mysteries. And by the way, this is the first time I’ve ever shared this publicly.

This may be a surprise to you… but I didn’t come up with them at all. They all come directly from the Holy Rosary, which is an incredible gift to us.

The first Leadership Mystery… which is **Humility**… is actually the fruit of the **First Joyful Mystery**.

The second… Love of People… is the fruit of the **Second Joyful Mystery**, which is the **Visitation**.

The third… Courage… is the fruit of the **Third Sorrowful Mystery**, which is **The Crowning with Thorns**.

The fourth… Perseverance… is the fruit of the **Fourth Sorrowful Mystery**, which is the **Carrying of the Cross**.

And the fifth… Patience… is the fruit of the **Fifth Sorrowful Mystery**, the **Crucifixion**.

So for me at least, this has been a way for me to blend how I want to develop and behave as a Leader with how I want to live my faith in my work environment.
And by the way it’s not just a work environment thing, it transcends every facet of life.

So back to that critical thinking that you’re all so good at.

Perhaps you can accept all… or part of what I said… and perhaps you can’t accept any of it. I’m OK with any of those answers.

But whether you buy into what I said or not… I do want to leave you with two questions that I think are worth thinking about every so often.

First question is this… when I project forward 10 years, what do I want to be known for as a Leader… or more importantly, as a person? And what behaviors and habits does that require of me?

And the second question is… how will I bring my faith into my professional life?

I really do think these are questions that are worth thinking about.

So let me tell you why I think these questions are so important…

We live in an incredible country. But there are a lot of challenges that we need to overcome. And we desperately need civil discourse, which is a difficult task in an environment where social media amplifies the most extreme positions on the left and the right.
Our communities... our businesses... our country... desperately need young people... YOU... with your intellect... and your education... and your faith... to play an important role in leading us in the future.

SO LEAD WELL... AND LIVE WELL.

Congratulations!
CATHERINE BLUME, FOR THE CLASS OF 2018
(VALEDICTORY)
Commencement Address

Administration, Trustees, Faculty, Parents, Friends, Relatives, and Graduating Seniors of the Class of 2018,

It’s hard to believe that this day has finally arrived, the day when saying goodbye to UD becomes a reality. We’ve written our last papers, pulled our last all-nighters, and suffered through our last finals as undergrads. I don’t know about you, but I had a difficult time accepting that this was the end. I accidentally deleted a 10 page Russian Novel paper from my computer the day before it was due, just so that I could rewrite it in what little time remained. I wasn’t going to deny myself one last late night in the library. In all honesty, I don’t think anything has ever stressed me out as much as that paper, the last one of my college career. But as I was writing it for the second time, I came across a quote in Dostoyevsky’s *The Idiot* that made me pause and reevaluate the frustrated, despairing, and self-pitying attitude with which I was approaching the assignment. Prince Myshkin, the novel’s hero, wisely states: “One can't understand
everything at once, we can't begin with perfection! In order to reach
perfection one must begin by being ignorant of a great deal. And if we
understand things too quickly, perhaps we shan't understand them
thoroughly.”

Perhaps I hadn’t understood everything I needed to understand the first
time I wrote my paper. As terrible as it was to write the same paper
twice, doing so made me reflect on the value of repetition, and on the
value, or rather lack of value, in an education that is never revisited, but
that we simply box off as belonging to this specific time in our life. Yes,
it’s true that we’ve completed all of our courses. But what would be the
point of having read all those books, studied all those philosophers and
theologians, memorized all those astronomical equations and
constellations, if we didn’t revisit them every once in a while and at least
give them the chance to keep teaching us, to keep helping us grow in
wisdom?
Although for the past few years our University has diligently fostered in us a desire to pursue wisdom and virtue, when we walk up and receive our diplomas today, we unfortunately will not become perfectly wise and virtuous individuals. Although we are a lot wiser than we were we when we showed up here a few years ago, bright-eyed and fresh-faced, we still have a long way to go and a lifetime to keep getting there. You may never need to explain Plato’s allegory of the cave, or Aquinas’ proofs for the existence of God, or Dante’s circles of hell in whatever career you’ve chosen to pursue, but I think Aristotle, Aquinas, and Dante would feel slightly rejected if you left them cooped up on a shelf for the rest of your life. An education that ceases to affect your life once the formal part of it ends would be of little worth. Thankfully, our education at the University of Dallas has been designed in such a way that we couldn’t leave it behind even if we wanted to. Right now, I’m sure the last thing most of us want to do is crack open a book, especially one as heady and difficult to grasp as most of the books that we’ve read at this school, but you may be surprised in the future, when you’ve been removed from the world of intellectualism for a little while, to find that
you miss those figures and those ideas that have crowded your brains for the past few years. Don’t forget to revisit what you’ve learned and studied here. If you’re someone who likes getting your money’s worth out of things, then there’s still a lot more to be had from your education at UD.

Besides pursuing and attaining wisdom, a goal which alone could take a lifetime to achieve, we have been taught to pursue virtue, something that also requires great practice and patience. In other words, because we are graduating from the University of Dallas, we are expected to be not only super smart, but super holy, as well. Low expectations, I know. But again, thankfully our education hasn’t just presented these ideals before us and then left us to figure out for ourselves how to achieve them. The best way to teach and to learn virtue is through examples of virtue, which we have seen a lot of at UD. We have seen examples of virtue in all those many books which we have read, and we have seen and have ourselves been examples of intellectual virtue, since without perseverance and love for the truth we would not be here today. More
importantly, however, we have seen examples of virtue in our professors, our mentors, our advisors, both spiritual and academic, and our friends—in all of the people that make up the intimate community that is UD. When I first came to UD I didn’t know a single person, but it was because of this virtue which I witnessed in everyone around me that I quickly realized any person I met would be a person worth being friends with. And it is because of this virtue, which has become the standard for our friendships, that we know with confidence that those friendships will last.

As students of the University of Dallas, we have had many examples and guides to help us along our chosen paths. St. John Paul II knew that young people “need guides, and they want them close at hand.” In his book *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, the pope added, “If they turn to authority figures they do so because they see in them a wealth of human warmth and a willingness to walk with them along the paths they are following.” Our professors, in particular, have been such guides and have sacrificed their time to help us along the paths which we are
following. They have been examples of the love, devotion, and cheerfulness with which we must live out our vocations. However, since we are no longer those bright-eyed, fresh-faced students that we were at the outset of our college careers, but instead must transition into the role which we have chosen for ourselves, whether that be a teacher, businessman or woman, doctor, husband or wife, priest or religious, actor, musician, what have you, we must ourselves become those guides and examples for others.

In addition, as graduates of the University of Dallas, we have been entrusted with a special mission: to be men and women of faith in the world. In the world in which we live, being a man or woman of faith will often require that we be soldiers of Christ, that is, that we have the courage to always witness to Him, no matter how inconvenient it is. It may require that we get beat up a little more for stating our beliefs than we get beat up for it now and that we be willing to suffer, but it is that suffering which will increase our capacity to love. By our love we will be soldiers of Christ, for there is no better way to witness to Him. We
have been armored with knowledge of the truth and with a desire to pursue wisdom and virtue, which our education at UD has given us, and we have learned how to live those truths and virtues in our friendships. Our possession of these blessings leaves us with little room for fear. But if we are ever greatly wounded, our faith has provided us with the hope that no matter how weak we are, no matter how far we fall, when we return to God, especially in the Sacraments, we will be healed.

My grandad once told me, “When you examine your conscience, don’t forget to consider the many times in your daily life when you are ungrateful and you forget to say thank you.” It’s advice that has stuck with me because I do often forget to say thank you. I forget that most of the things in my life are gifts and that they therefore require gratitude. This university is a gift, and it is a privilege to be graduating from it.

Our professors are gifts. The opportunities which we have had to be so closely and personally guided by our professors are privileges that not all university students have. Thank you, professors, for your example and your guidance.
Our family is also a gift. I’m sure I speak for most of you when I say that I would probably not be here today were it not for the support and guidance of my family, especially my parents. It is their example of self-sacrifice and love that has guided me the most.

Finally, our friends are gifts, and I think we can all agree that we have been abundantly blessed in that regard. Thank you for your examples of how to pursue wisdom and virtue, of how to witness to Christ, and of how to love your friends well. I cannot wait to see what wonderful things you do with your lives, and I very much hope that your education at the University of Dallas continues to impact you throughout the rest of your lives.