



# REGIS

## GRADUATION ADDRESS TO THE CLASS OF 2013

By Adam D'Sa

Thank you Dr. Tocchet, Mr. Domino, trustees, Fr. Judge, Ms. Ross. Thank you faculty and staff, family and friends, the rest of my class of 2013. It is my distinct pleasure to address you today.

I found it fitting that when I started this speech, I went through an experience that has been repeatedly shared by all Regis students. I opened a word document, changed the font to 12 pt. Times New Roman, and stared at the blank page before me for far too long, until it threatened to consume my sanity. The comforting words of Dr. Tocchet were now ominous as they echoed in my head. "Each year the speaker does a good job," he had said, "You're not going to fall flat on your face."

The question that you, my classmates, have implicitly deemed me fit to answer is *what have the past four years meant to us?* To begin to piece together an answer, I turned to the people who have helped me answer many of the toughest questions: the production team behind renowned search engine, Google. In a valiant effort, Google returned 2,180,000,000 results in response to the phrase *what have the past four years meant to us?* and I went through every one of them before deeming the search insufficient. By this time it was the night of May 31<sup>st</sup> and in desperation I turned to the collection of books I've amassed here at Regis, everything from *Ethan Frome* to *A Concise History of the Catholic Church*, in frantic search of meaning.

The novels from past English courses lead me to believe that meaning may be found in character development. We've gone from short, socially awkward individuals... to taller individuals. Were the Regis experience a novel, we would delve into its various themes, among them the pervasive sleeplessness which affects the characters.

My math textbooks defined a value as the output of a function, and if we were to define Regis as the function and ourselves as x-values (I apologize for reopening the mental wounds calculus

has inflicted) then the value is the white-tuxedoed group before me. A series of alternating positive and negative slopes has lead us to this common final point.

My chemistry textbook reminded me of the law of conservation of mass, which states that matter can neither be created nor destroyed despite being subjected to immense pressures or temperature changes. Ironically, students who were subjected to the Chemistry AP exam claim to have felt matter being destroyed within their very core. It was later discovered that this was just self-esteem. But chemistry is concerned with interaction between atoms; it would find meaning in the composition of the Regis community and the bonds formed between its members.

History tells us we would find meaning by examining the past, and with it the curious cultural phenomenon that convinced 14 year old boys to endure long commutes to a building with no girls. Biology would then have us analyze the strange resulting ecosystem where conflicts, if not solved through well-mannered debate, devolved into the hostile melees known as "Lower Gym Basketball."

And physics tells us that in a world without air, a piano falls to the ground at the same rate as a feather and our lives have no meaning whatsoever.

Yet each discipline falls short of characterizing our whole experience here. The reason, it seems to me, is that the pews of this church are not filled with textbooks or paperbacks, but with people. (An insightful observation on my part I know) The subject matter, and the meaning it lends to our past four years, is inseparable from those who taught it to us. Allusions to Shakespeare will eternally make us remember the time Mr. Kiczek grew a moustache, rendering his students unable to focus on a single line of prose for weeks. Every time we look at a scoreboard to see the teams tied at 11, we will know

that somewhere a certain physical education teacher's heart is leaping for joy at this marvelous "picket fence." Those of us taught by Dr. Matone will always be confused as to whether force is measured in Newtons or in "SHAK-U-LAHS." We will remember Dr. Carew's accent, and the way it made aggressive bacterial infections seem like the calmest of subjects. We will remember history classes that we left fully convinced of Mr. Connelly's omniscience and theology classes we left vaguely convinced of Mr. Conti's divinity. We know we resented the assignments. We loathed the problem sets and the argumentative essays. We fulfilled our duty as students to bemoan and lament each moment of effort you required of us. We cursed you under our breath as the clock hit 12:10 and you still held us in class. And today we thank you for all of it.

When I asked my mom for advice about what to say today she told me, "Adam, I'd say the most important thing to keep in mind when you write your speech is to not embarrass yourself." Then my brother, Jared, squinted at me and said, "You've already done that quite thoroughly!" before turning to high-five my dad. I tell this story for two reasons. First, to reveal that the Regis administration has gathered you all here merely to humor me in my attempt to win my family's admiration. And second, to transition into another heartfelt thank you, this one for the people who've helped us outside the walls of 55 East 84<sup>th</sup> Street. They are the fathers who sat next to us on the railroad on our first commutes. They are the mothers who asked "how was school?" 560 times only to hear us answer "good" 560 times. They are the siblings who looked over our shoulders as we read decision letters from colleges. They've been our harshest critics and our proudest admirers. And for all the support we have thanked you for, we know how much more there was for which we didn't. Our parents, guardians, and grandparents, who read to us and answered our endless questions when we were toddlers. Many are blinking now in disbelief at having watched those toddlers receive their diplomas moments ago. The older I get the more I realize how very little I have to do with who I am. Chuck Palahniuk, author of *Invisible Monsters* put it better when he wrote "Nothing of me is original. I am the combined effort of everyone I've ever known." We owe much of ourselves to the parents, families, teachers, and classmates who have molded us.

In the mail that I received from colleges, I noticed a common promise made. Each school promises that you, the potential student, will be changed in your time at that institution. I think this is undoubtedly true, that in the next few years we will change. To go back to the question of meaning, I think the truest testament to what Regis has meant will be what remains unchanged. Freed from the Regis dress code, our clothing

style may change (some of us might abandon the beloved khaki pants). Inside jokes will be forgotten and there will be a time when we will look at the quotes on our yearbook pages in utter confusion (for some this time may have been when you received your yearbook). As much as I hope that the words of this speech will be etched into history alongside the Gettysburg address and Martin Luther King's *I Have a Dream*, I know that they too will be forgotten. What will remain is the person Regis has made us, along with an openness to the world around us, and a desire to change it for the better.

A few months ago I worked the coat check at one of the annual "JUG nights" where members of former Regis classes return to the building. On their way in most of the men just smile politely as they hand their coats to the current students. But after a night of eating, drinking, and reminiscing with former classmates, they see the current Regis students handing their coats back to them as rare treasures, versions of their former selves. While some saw this as reason to whisper the words of the alma mater and begin to weep, most offered their personal words of advice. I remember one man in particular who kept repeating, "Regis is a gift from God, boys. Don't forget that this is a gift from God. Be sure to thank Him for it. And use it."

At this point I feel compelled to offer a bit of wisdom or inspiration. I have nothing to offer in terms of the former, so I will try my hand at the latter. To my classmates: *the world is your oyster*. For a long time I thought that saying meant that for a group of bright, gifted individuals, the world is filled with a myriad of opportunities. It is like an oyster with its mouth wide open awaiting only you to reach in and take the pearl. However, I recently learned that this is not the case. The phrase originates from Shakespeare's play, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. (I'll now pause and allow you all to enjoy the image of Mr. Kiczek's moustache that the Shakespeare reference has induced.) In the play, one character asks another for monetary aid, to which he responds "I will not lend thee a penny." Undaunted, the first character says, "Well, then, the world's mine oyster which I with sword shall open." So the idiom is not a proclamation of the abundance of good fortune which awaits all of you. The world is, indeed, your oyster. But it is harsh and unforgiving; its mouth is tightly closed and you must use your talent, initiative, and persistence to pry it open. Do not despair, though, because each of you is well-equipped to do so. The past four years have thoroughly convinced me of your future successes. In fact, I can assure you that you're not going to fall flat on your face.

Thank you and God bless you all.