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## 2016 Commencement Remarks by the President

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# Presidential Remarks



Friday, May 27, 2016

Members of the Class of 2016, four years ago when I formally welcomed you to the campus at your New Student Convocation, I ended my remarks by commenting that during their college years at the University of Paris, roommates St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Francis Xavier and St. Peter Favre, with several others, founded the Society of Jesus. 450 years after their college experience, their legacy continues to have global impact, and through the mission of the College of the Holy Cross has directly touched each of us. I then ended my remarks that afternoon by saying:

As I look at you, the Holy Cross class of 2016, I wonder what experiences you will share, what ideas will capture your minds, what deep desires will move your hearts, what human needs will inspire your generosity, and what life-transforming projects you will devise to serve the common good? These undergraduate years have the power to set the direction for your entire life. Enjoy them.

Now, 4 years later, I hope you have enjoyed your time on Mount St. James. While I suspect that for many of you it is still too early to discern with precision your life's direction, I hope you are taking the next steps in your life's journey with confidence. Clearly the intellectual life you pursued here has given you a wide range of new questions and interests which are now leading many of you to graduate studies. For those of you about to enter the workforce, hopefully the education you have received, the values we have emphasized and the profession you are choosing will both improve the human condition and care for the earth, our common home. And as people of Faith and responsible citizens, the commitment to service which was such an important part of your Holy Cross experience is motivating many of you to find new ways of making a difference in our world through programs such as the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, Teach for America, or City Year. For all the members of the Class of 2016, I have no doubt that your immersion experiences, study abroad, Maymester trips, alternate Spring Break and other international and domestic cross-cultural experiences have stirred in you a life-long desire to learn more about different cultures, ways of living, political and social needs, and religious differences and similarities. If the College has been at least moderately successful in our attempts to create an inclusive and welcoming community here on Mount St. James, then we can expect that in the years ahead you will become increasingly sensitive, understanding and open to those who see the world with a different lens or are differently gifted, and will work for social justice when it is denied. Finally, in all the experiences where you have had to learn truths the hard way, have been challenged and struggled, have failed and rebounded, or have had to wait as the slow process of inspiration and insight unfolded, I hope you have been graced with patience, humility, and compassion, characteristics so badly needed in contemporary society.

Graduates, having just received your diplomas, your four years as students at the College have come to a close. I want you to know that all of us who have committed ourselves to your education and formation, have come to see ourselves and our world differently because of all that you have given us. We are proud of your accomplishments, in awe of your talent and generosity, and graced in your friendship.

To your parents and families, and to our alums and donors who have made this educational experience possible for you, we will be forever grateful. And as you now enter the renowned community of alumni who so enthusiastically support the College and each other, we look forward to sharing with you the work of promoting and advancing this educational community in the years ahead.

Finally, for all who have prepared this ceremony, and for our speakers and honorary degree recipients whom we are about to recognize, we are truly blessed. Thank you.

Now, it is my pleasure to introduce your 2016 Valedictorian, Emily Conn. From Melrose, Massachusetts, Emily is an English major in the College Honors Program, a member of Alpha Sigma Nu, the Jesuit Honor Society, and this morning she is graduating from Holy Cross with her twin brother, Donald.

Emily is known by multiple constituencies on our campus through her sustained involvement with campus ministry as a lector and liturgical coordinator and her participation and leadership in the Manresa and Escape retreats. She has been an RA for three years, most recently as the Head RA in Mulledy Hall. She has been an Orientation Leader for both summer and fall orientations, has participated in Alternate Spring Break for all 4 years, and traveled to Nicaragua on an immersion trip this past January. Emily will soon enter the Jesuit Volunteer Corps and move west to San Jose, California where she will work with Sacred Heart Community Service, a Center dedicated to helping challenged families achieve economic self-sufficiency. How blessed they are to receive such a thoughtful leader noted for her sharp intellect, enormous generosity and quiet competence. Emily....