

**Graduation speech 2018**  
1,001 words // 6 mins, 45 secs

(((HAVE CELL PHONE OUT FOR PROP)))  
(((INTRO)))

Class of 2018, it is my honor to provide you with a final message. To draw inspiration, I pored over Aristotle, St. Augustine, Plato, and of course St. John Baptist de La Salle. But in the end, I found my inspiration in yesterday's newspaper ... more specifically, the comics.

(((PUT UP SLIDE)))

I came across this cartoon. In case you can't quite see it ... there's a man walking down the  
(((SLOW))) "STARE-AT-YOUR-PHONE-NATURE-TRAIL" ... which leads him off a cliff.  
And the caption reads, (((SLOW))) "The INTERSECTION of Technology and Darwinism."  
This is a cautionary tale.

Tonight I'd like to talk about INTERSECTIONS ...having the confidence to step off the curb ...  
and seeing life's intersections as *opportunities*, not cliffs.

(((TAKE DOWN THE SLIDE)))

(((STEP OFF THE CURB, TAKE RISKS)))

We learn to negotiate street intersections at a young age. Color-coded lights. Crosswalks mark a safe perimeter. Traffic signals provide a reasonable expectation of order ... and they protect us from danger. Without these signs, there would be chaos.

But we learned the rules ... and we learned to be aware of our surroundings. We mustered the courage to (((SLOW))) *step off the curb*.

It was scary when you stepped off the curb four years ago at Christian Brothers. As your class salutatorian Matthew Thomas shared, your frosh Lock-In felt like chaos. But you trusted that you'd be safe. And you were.

You stepped off the curb when you went on retreats and finally Kairos. You tried vulnerability. You learned about yourself, others, and God. Personally, my life was enriched on Kairos 69 by getting to know Hannah Kaplon, Jack O'Hearn, Julia Padilla, Michael Ingram, Grace Bunting, Cesar Lopez, Katherine Stiplosek ... and J.R. Aguirre.

You stepped off the curb when you went to your first date dance, when you auditioned for your first play, when you tried out for the team ... and when you made new friends.

You stepped off the curb when you served the homeless, when you went to the food bank, when you tutored underprivileged students, or when you interacted with migrants and border patrol officers on Ven a Ver.



(((SLOW))) Think about the journey you would have missed if you didn't *step off the curb* at Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. four years ago.

(((SEE THE CLASH OF OLD AND NEW AS OPPORTUNITY, NOT THREAT)))

(((PAUSE))) Navigating busy city streets has not always been as "easy" as it is today. Think about the streets you walked this morning ... outside the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament. Did you know that when Christian Brothers H.S. – NOW YOUR ALMA MATER – first opened in 1876 ... it was located on K Street ... across the street from where the Cathedral sits today! Imagine ... if you can ... your FELLOW Christian Brothers alumni from the class of 1918 walking K Street (((SLOW))) when *cars* were new ... and *horses & buggies* were still common. It was truly chaotic.

That chaos provides a nice metaphor for the world you are about to enter. *Old* models are colliding with *new* models. (((SMILE))) If you've tried to explain Snapchat to your grandparents, you might know what I'm talking about.

These past four years at Christian Brothers, we've tried to teach you to be critical thinkers and problem solvers so you can navigate life's intersections.

Some intersections will be easy. How can you go wrong at the intersection of Hope & Love ... or the intersection of Kindness & Charity?

Some intersections will require critical thought ... such as the intersection of Faith & Reason or the intersection of Pride & Humility.

Some intersections will present you with problems to solve ... such as the intersection of Convenience & True Friendship ... or the intersection of Church Teachings & Popular Culture.

Some of the intersections you'll encounter will present conflict such as the intersection of Personal Reward & the Common Good, the intersection of Profit & Honesty ... or the intersection of Instant Gratification & Long Term Happiness. It is at these intersections where your character will be tested. At these intersections of conflict, look beyond the THREAT ... and find the OPPORTUNITY.

Our nation is at an uncomfortable and divisive intersection of political and social life. YOU ... the Christian Brothers High School Class of 2018 have a unique OPPORTUNITY to make a difference. You come from diverse economic backgrounds, political persuasions, and religious faiths. Your parents have put you in a position to experience this diversity in a safe community surrounded by nurturing teachers and role models. You have learned to appreciate the differences in one another. True, CB is not the only high school with rich diversity. But not all of those high schools are *Lasallian Catholic* high schools where students' *hearts* are *touched* by deep-seeded core principles, including "respect for all persons," "inclusive community," and "faith in the presence of God." At Christian Brothers, we don't always agree ... but we can always be respectful and listen.



**NON SEQUITUR** by Wiley

THE INTERSECTION  
OF TECHNOLOGY  
AND DARWINISM

PHOTO BY ANDREW EMEL WILSON

WILEY WILEY INC. LTD. 4-1



GOODWIFE.COM/INDEPENDENT

WILEYINK@GARTLINK.NET

What you've experienced these past four years is not common ... but it is INTENTIONAL. God's divine hand brought you together these past four years. You have experienced Christ's Kingdom. Now, you have an OPPORTUNITY to go "out there" to the INTERSECTION of Today & Tomorrow and show the world that it is possible to build a community where everyone feels valued and respected.

((CONCLUSION))

It won't always be easy but, we are confident that you will choose the right path when you encounter life's intersections. And *if* you happen to find yourself heading down the *wrong* path, it's OK to turn around. Smart people do that. And you're smart people.

You got this! Your parents, grandparents, guardians and teachers have taught you well. You are aware of your surroundings. ((SLOW)) You know who you are.

And as you *step off the curb*, remember that you are ALWAYS in the HOLY PRESENCE OF GOD.

St. John Baptist de La Salle ... PRAY FOR US  
Live Jesus in our Hearts ... FOREVER.



## Principal Chris Orr – Graduation Welcome Remarks – May 25, 2018

Good evening families, friends, and most importantly, members of the Class of 2018! Welcome to the 142<sup>nd</sup> commencement celebration of Christian Brothers High School. My name is Chris Orr and I am honored to serve as Principal. This year marks my first year in this role, and, I have to say that the Class of 2018 has set the bar high for all future classes.

St. John Baptist de La Salle - Throughout his life and certainly in his vocation as the Founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, St. John Baptist de La Salle wrote numerous letters and meditations. A quote from one of these writings that resonated deeply for me last year, as I sat in the audience as a parent watching my son, Nico, graduate from Christian Brothers while knowing that I would soon be taking on the role of principal, is...

“To touch the hearts of your students is the greatest miracle you can perform.”

I reflected on all the extraordinary teachers who had touched Nico’s heart and inspired him throughout his four years of high school. I contemplated, with some trepidation and much excitement, the sacred responsibility of carrying on this phenomenal tradition of Lasallian Catholic education. What I had not considered at the time, was the impact that you *((gesture to graduates))*, members of the Class of Two Thousand Eighteen, would have on my heart and mind. I am a better educator for having known you and you leave an indelible mark on my heart as the first graduating class to walk with me on this journey.

To our distinguished guests, these graduates are extraordinary examples of our school motto - “Enter to Learn. Leave to Serve.” They are the largest graduating class in Christian Brothers High School history with 281 young men and women. They are also the first graduating class to be born in the new millennium. They have distinguished themselves as scholars, artists, and athletes. They have given of themselves lovingly in service to the vulnerable. They have served as retreat leaders, explored and celebrated faith. Most importantly, they have shared of themselves. Each has contributed unique gifts to our community and each is forever a part of the history and tradition of this incredible school.

Speaking of history, are there any Christian Brother alumni in the house? Thank you for your contributions to our history and to this great legacy. *((applaud))*

Earlier this week, I read on Pope Francis’ Instagram account...*((\*\*\*)*. Pope Francis wrote: “Children and young people are the future; they are our strength; they are what keeps us moving forward; they are the ones in whom we put our hope...” Hope is a deep word. One of our great American leaders described hope as “that thing inside us that insists, despite all evidence to the contrary, that something better awaits us if we have the courage to reach for it, and to work for it, and to fight for it.”

I encourage you, class of 2018 – have the courage to reach, have the courage to work, and have the courage to fight...

In the fall, the Class of 2018 is off to colleges and universities in 23 states, the District of Columbia and two foreign countries. Two of our young men have enlisted in the Navy where they will serve and protect this great nation.

Tonight, we celebrate them all. I welcome you, again, to the 142<sup>nd</sup> commencement celebration of Christian Brothers High School.

God Bless you...and let’s celebrate the class of 2018!



Valedictory speech – Class of 2018  
Isabella Nguyen '18

GOOD EVENING family, guests, faculty, and fellow classmates.

My name is Isabel Nguyen — Yisa to those who know me. I am honored to speak as the Valedictorian of Christian Brothers High School's Class of 2018. I would like to extend a heartfelt welcome to our honored guests and a word of congratulations to my classmates. After four years of schooling, it is nearly time for us to walk across the stage to receive our diplomas, then move on to the next chapter of our lives. But before we proceed with the ceremony, please allow me to impart a threefold message.

Message #1: BE GRATEFUL

Whether we are moving across country to attend college, taking a gap year, or going to school close to home, in the next few months our lives will change radically. In this moment, I would like to thank everyone who has made our journey possible. Mostly, I would like to recognize our families, friends, and teachers. Each of these people has made an indelible mark on our lives.

From a foundation of unconditional love to the crucial life lessons they have instilled in us, our family members have always encouraged us to persevere in the face of difficulties, and they have tirelessly supported our quest for greatness. Much of who we are, we owe to them. A similar statement can be said about our CB faculty and staff. In the words of Mr. Brendan Hogan, our Lasallian Educator of the Year, teaching for our CB teachers is not only a profession, but a passion. At Christian Brothers, we have had the unique opportunity to deepen our faith, and at the same time, pursue our academic interests in a place where enrichment of the soul is as fundamental as the development of the mind; this has been to our great advantage. Lastly, I would like to express gratitude for our friends and classmates. Would any of us really have made it this far without our confidants, our homies, and our BFFs? Many of these friends have given us the gifts of belonging and camaraderie. All of these people — our families, teachers, and friends — have been and continue to be our most ardent supporters and strongest allies. Be grateful for them each and every day.

Message #2: BE DARING

At the risk of sounding like an excerpt from Animal Planet, I would like to tell you about the Mobula Ray. The Mobula Ray is a species of manta ray that travels in a pack of around 250,000 or more. When it's surrounded by hundreds of thousands of other rays, how does it stand out from the crowd? Well, these animals have an extraordinary way of getting noticed. During certain times of the year, these rays will launch themselves out of the water, flying several feet into the air, to land with an impact that sends a huge boom through the water, drawing attention to themselves. The higher the leap, the bigger the bang. Those who make the biggest impact on spectators gain the best chance of getting noticed.

I use the visual imagery of the Mobula Rays as an analogy to our journey into adulthood. Sometimes we will have to do some unconventional things and intentionally leap out of our comfort zone where it may feel like there's no air to breathe. Yes, sometimes there will be fear of the unknown and a risk of failure. And, yes, sometimes we may flop unceremoniously back into the water... but other times, that unwavering commitment to being adventurous, ambitious, and daring will be the catalyst which allows us to stand apart from the crowd. So be daring and challenge yourself on a continual basis: think



critically, act ethically, and dream passionately. If we seek these worthy pursuits, how can we be anything but stellar?

### Message #3: CREATE YOUR LEGACY

Our group of graduating seniors has already done some pretty amazing things: several have marched in support of important causes such as social equality, women's rights, public safety, and free expression. A few have started non-profit organizations, and cumulatively, we as a class have donated thousands of service hours to the disadvantaged and marginalized. Looking at the vast array of such merit, charity, and justice, I am certain that we will continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of others. And perhaps it is not as important to be able to say exactly how we will change the world, but rather simply to harbor the capability, desire, and commitment to transform our communities in any way we can. By putting our greatest effort into everything we do — even seemingly minor things — we can ultimately make a difference on a much larger scale. Like a pebble that creates ever-expanding ripples in the water, our life-long personal efforts can and will positively and incrementally impact the world around us. This will be our legacy.

In the words of theologian John Wesley,

“Do all the good you can.  
By all the means you can.  
In all the ways you can.  
In all the places you can.  
At all the times you can.  
To all the people you can.  
As long as ever you can.”

So, follow these three seemingly simple yet fundamental directives:  
Be Grateful. Be Daring. And Create Your Legacy.  
Congratulations, Class of 2018.

Thank you and goodnight.



Matthew Thomas 2018 Salutatorian Speech:

Forever Growing & Cultivating Your Garden

Good evening,

For those of you who do not know me, I am the man, the myth, the legend Tom English. Thank you for being here with me as we honor and celebrate the graduating class of 335 BC. Underneath your seats you will find the newest edition of "Traditions and Encounters" along with a signed photo of Alexander the Great and I after the Battle of Granicus. Wow, what a guy!

No, in all reality, I'm a different legend known as Matthew Thomas and before I get into the heartwarming memories and cliché anecdotes contained in this speech, I would like each member of the graduating class to close their eyes for a moment and imagine that there is a seed in their palm. This was us freshman year; awkward, naive, and scared, yet ready to blossom in high school. Now imagine yourself placing the seed in the soil at your feet. Christian Brothers was the soil in which we were planted four years ago. The soil that gave us the necessary nutrients and the suitable environment needed for optimal growth. Now after four years of taking in the bright sun and appreciating the rich soil in which we were placed, we have grown into beautiful flowers ready to be picked and admired and ready to leave the soil we have grown accustomed to. Seniors, its time to open our eyes and embody everything that CB has given us.

I don't know about y'all, but I remember walking onto campus for lock-in as an awkward and nervous freshman and thinking to myself, "oh lord, maybe I should just turn around and get back in the car." I was scared because I didn't feel comfortable in my own skin and felt like staying up with a bunch of strangers was the last thing I wanted to do. However, I reluctantly



grabbed my orange class shirt and was sent to Mrs. Brousseau's room to do an activity. The room was full of other anxious freshmen who probably felt as uncomfortable as I did. After a few minutes, the two upperclassmen in the room told us to write a letter to our future selves. I'm going to share a portion of what I wrote to myself; please bear with me.

"Dear Senior Matthew, This is Freshman Matthew in the year 2014 at Freshman Lock-In. I hope you reached the goals you set. I hope you stayed true to yourself the past four years. Remember when you were scared to make friends? Funny, huh? Keep shooting for your dreams at CB because I believe you can! Move forward bae." I think freshman Matthew would be proud, but I also think he might be a little shocked that I've stopped using the word "bae" in my everyday speech.

After our letter writing activity, we participated in a rally that set the tone for our time at CB. The rally was energetic and pushed us to leave our comfort zones. It allowed fun and lively individuals like Anna Clare Nelson, Emma Brueckner, and Kathy Eke to show how much they loved CB through their bubbly energy and enthusiastic class spirit. The rally ended and we gathered on the Mary Lawn for what started out as a large gathering of self-conscious kids, but ended as a massive mosh pit of orange shirts as we all jumped to Calvin Harris's "Summer," which in my opinion, is still a classic. Throughout the night we ate, laughed, and began the process of creating friendships and becoming comfortable with one another. We let our walls down and felt safe doing so because CB was an environment in which different individuals can find commonalities and feel comfortable being who they are.

As the dawn arrived, we all walked to the back parking lot to share in the most important moment of lock-in: the sunrise. The reds melted into the pinks, the yellows blended into the



oranges, and the sun started to appear in the distance. The sunrise was extraordinary because it was the perfect ending to our first collective class experience. It was the first time we felt like a part of the CB community because we shared in a moment that is incomprehensible to people who haven't experienced it. Unfortunately, the night came to an end and we were picked up by our parents. I remember being unable to explain to my mom how exciting the night was for two reasons: the first is that I was out cold the moment I put on my seatbelt and the second is that I was at a loss of words to describe my experience and emotions. For the first time in my life, I was speechless.

I'm glad I didn't leave lock-in. I'm glad I was able to take part in such a beautiful bonding experience with my peers. I didn't know it then, but there would be many more similar experiences over the next four years. From Holy Bowls to Homecomings, Prom to Spirit Days, our first day to our last, we have grown as a class. We have found ourselves within the gates of CB; we have formed unbreakable friendships, discovered new interests and created unforgettable memories. These bonds and memories will withstand the test of time because they have found special homes in all our hearts.

A short week ago we were celebrating our last Founder's Day. It was a bittersweet moment because we received our last yearbooks, wrote our last signatures, and participated in our last CB event. We took pictures with our childhood classmates and wrote heartfelt messages to our new friends in our yearbooks. I felt the love and happiness in the air, that indescribable joy of being appreciated and loved by the people around you. I heard laughter coming from clusters of seniors, saw some unlikely friends hugging and giggling, and many seniors begging teachers to sign their yearbooks. This year, Founder's Day was more than a celebration of our founder,



Saint John Baptist de la Salle; it was a farewell and our send-off into the world. The day went by so fast, just like our time at CB, but it was the perfect way to say goodbye.

Seniors, the sun is rising once more, but this time we are older, wiser, and ready to face the world. I would have never thought I would be standing here before you four years ago. I found myself at CB and have learned that I have the keys to unlock the doors in front of me. It's important to remember that you do too.

I am not the only person who has grown over the past four years. The extremely talented Jacob Cherry and Jenn Roberts have blossomed into superstars before our eyes, ready to see their names on Broadway. Mia Nieves, Claire Martin, and Kate Donovan have shown us what it means to truly fight for the future of our country and for our basic human rights. I admire the brave individuals in this auditorium who have demonstrated that silence is never an option. Violet Gabales and Grace Bunting have serenaded our hearts with their lovely voices, while Cruz Solano and Amelia Conaghan have created beautiful pieces of artwork, showing the power of artistic creativity. Spencer Webb, Cameron Walker, Audrey Baier and other athletes have spent hours practicing and improving their craft, proving that dedication and determination are the keys to success both on and off the field. Men like Patrick Wiseman and Jack O'Hearn embody the words written all around CB, "enter to learn, leave to serve." Thank you for your willingness to serve in the armed forces so we are all able to enjoy the opportunities and freedoms in this country. While at CB, we have all grown into talented individuals who are determined to strive for different dreams and pursue unique ambitions.

To all the people who have touched my heart and I yours, thank you for showing me how important growth is and what it means to live boldly, love wholeheartedly, and continue the



ongoing process of enriching our lives. Morgan Jones, thank you for being the most supportive, loving, and wholesome person I have ever met. Shatara Mouton, thank you for bringing an abundance of laughter and joy into my life on a daily basis. Chazz Pettis, thank you for being the Solange to my Beyonce and for always being there for me. The three of you changed my life and I will love y'all forever. I will also cherish the countless nights when I played Fortnite with Amanda Ledesma and Meera Khaira instead of studying for AP Lit. Sorry, Miss. Shackel.

I would also like to acknowledge the special individuals in K69G3, K70G1, and K70G9 who have all taught me what it means to be authentic, compassionate, and honest. My heart is full of gratitude and love for each of you. There are no words to describe your impact on my life. While leading Kairos, I got closer to someone I always wanted to be friends with. Lauren Loyola, thank you for filling my life with so much joy and for allowing me to be a part of your journey. Kairos is more than a retreat; it is a time of self-reflection and it helped me realize that before I could see the good in others, I had to see the good in myself. I think this is important and I would like you to write it down.

To the senior class, our lives are just beginning and the passion, love, and excitement I see in all of your faces gives me hope for the future. The world needs people like us. People who are not afraid to put others before themselves, challenge social standards, and change the hearts of those around them through kind actions and insightful words.

Many people say that the years you spend in high school are the best years of your life, but I know that our best years are to come. My outgoing, caring, and boisterous class of 2018, as we leave our cherished home at CB and begin the next chapter of our lives, we must remember that we have all grown from very different seeds, but have grown in the same soil and have



enjoyed the warmth from the same sunlight. It's important to continue developing the values and principles we have learned here because they will form the foundation of our lives.

I want to leave you with a quote by Maya Angelou in which she says, "you can only become truly accomplished at something you love. Don't make money your goal. Instead, pursue the things you love doing, and then do them so well that people can't take their eyes off you."

The world is your stage, field, art studio, classroom, and a marvelous place to explore and find yourself. Go show the world what it means to be a Brother, but more importantly, what it means to be you.

Class of 2018, go forth and cultivate your gardens.

We will all be standing in the sun with you.

Thank you.

(PLAY CALVIN HARRIS "SUMMER")