

Salutatorian Speech ('22)

Good evening to all of the friends, family, faculty, staff, the Board of Trustees, and all other distinguished guests who have graced our class with your presence tonight. Thank you so much for joining us to celebrate this momentous occasion and stepping stone into the next stage of our lives as graduates of Christian Brothers High School. If it were not for you, your support, and your devotion to our journey as not only college-prep students and children of God, but young-adults of the future, we would not be where we are today.

My name is Joshua Elboom and I have the special honor and privilege of opening our graduation ceremony with my own perspective on the past four years while somehow encouraging you all to continue living lives filled with passion, purpose, and pumpkin spice lattes. The truth is that that isn't the truth. I've spent the past 24 hours, both starting and mostly finishing my speech, wondering how to make a lasting impact. How can I truly be "inspirational" to these people who have heard nearly every motivational quote available on YouTube, Pinterest, and Google Images... trust me, I checked.

- First, I would like to recognize the custodians, groundskeepers, and all of the facility members who made this special event possible. Your hard work and long hours do not go unnoticed... So underrated tbh/rate
- I would also like to give a special thanks to my teachers — the ones who kept pushing me in class to "use what I know", to, at the bare minimum, "write down the concept", and to never use first-person pronouns in formal writing — and from me, personally, I, myself, would like to acknowledge my OUTSTANDING parents for sticking with me through thick and thin, through arguments over how many pencils to pack in my bag for SAT testing to staying up long past midnight so I could submit the application to the college I will be attending this fall 2 minutes before the deadline. They have always encouraged me to use my God-given talents to the best of my abilities whenever possible. If there were words that expressed more than "I Love You", they would be yours.

Most of us entered CB's campus with excitement, hopes, dreams, and even thoughts already of who to ask to homecoming. Some came in to 4315 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd

with tons of old friends from middle school, and others, like myself, who were still struggling to figure out this whole “high school thing” while at the same time trying to develop a stable social life outside of our safe and sheltered lives back in 8th grade.

Freshman and Sophomore year, as stated by Sydney Smith’s yearbook quote, passed by in a <zoom>. [lil PAUSE] Eventually came Junior year when everyone so badly wanted to adjust back to a normal life beyond COVID... but that wasn’t the case. We went from napping at home during Microsoft Teams classes and somehow passing online tests we never studied for with flying colors, to sitting in plastic-wrapped classrooms and nasal swabbing during religion class every week.

Eventually we became Seniors [PAUSE] and realized that our time together would come to a close before we even knew it. We showed up to Holy Bowl with all of our CB paraphernalia, excited to finally experience a moment together that wasn’t through a jumbled mess of muted black rectangles on our iPads... [lil PAUSE] and things started feeling a bit like normal again. Returning to the classrooms full-time was such a breath of fresh air, although the mere thought of sitting inside Mr. Eckel’s room made my blood pressure rise to an unhealthy amount at times. But it wasn’t necessarily the promise of an illustrious college future or riveting course material that kept us coming back each day, “the real treasure [was] the friends we made along the way”. To be honest, I probably wouldn’t be standing here before you tonight if it weren’t for the connections I formed at the beginning of Freshman year, the friends who convinced me to join all the hard classes because “it’ll be fun”... whatever that was supposed to mean... but their convincing words worked... and I wouldn’t regret taking those classes for the world. Through quick pep-talks of encouragement by the lockers as the bell for class was about to ring, a sense of camaraderie during Mr. English’s chivalry unit, and the power of shared Google Docs, we made it through to the end of Senior Year.

Much like our friends might push us to make questionable decisions at times or even try something new and exciting like the cafeteria tuna sandwiches, CB has offered countless opportunities for us to build meaningful connections, to reach outside of our bubbles, and to truly seek discomfort. From my Intro to High School Boot Camp in the summer of 2018, to Lock-In, Open Dances, and retreats such as Kairos <shout out to K82G3>, our school has created an environment in which we as students are encouraged to stay curious, continue

asking questions, and share our lived experiences with others in hopes of reaching a sense of commonality. [PAUSE] The only question is if we are willing to continue pushing ourselves in this way.

Although, [lil PAUSE] finding common ground is often much easier said than done, to which I touch back on the call to **seek discomfort**, a phrase coined and popularized by the group, Yes Theory. Leading up to high school, I had always been extremely uncomfortable in social settings, especially in regards to public speaking. It was merely a week or two ago at Chili's, for the first time in my life, that I referred to our waiter by their name.

If you told me 4 years ago that I would be leading and speaking in front of small groups, delivering a speech in front of thousands, assisting with English and Math homework for children in Montana whom I had never met before during Venaver Blackfeet, or participating in the seemingly nonchalant act of distributing ashes on my classmates' foreheads during Ash Wednesday, I would think you're making it up.

I'm very proud to call you all my classmates, my friends, my family. I feel like I could honestly text or call anyone and that they would be there to hear what I have to say, and if not, at least snap back a picture of their forehead or only half their face, a maneuver I myself have been guilty of. Only until this year has it hit me that I could walk up to anyone in the hallway just to strike up casual conversation or reminisce on that one weekend night of pizza and puzzle-making @ Nick G's house. [lil PAUSE] But it's more than just being approachable, you all are there to not only hear, but genuinely **listen** to what others have to say. I would not have discovered this truth if I had not mustered up the courage to engage with new faces, to overcome my fear of rejection, to accept the fact that my crush only "loved me like a brother", and to realize the endless benefits that come with the nerve-wracking decision to reach out first.

As Bishop Jaime Soto so beautifully recited earlier this morning at the Baccalaureate Mass, "do this in memory of me". Now of course, he wasn't referring to himself, but to Christ, to God. [PAUSE] Class of '22, I challenge you all to not only carry out the rest of your unknown adventures in memory of God, but to do so in memory of us, in memory.. of what we have built together, in memory.. of what we have accomplished, in memory.. of where we have come from and the loved ones who have shaped us into resilient human beings... because life isn't always comfortable. In fact, it only gets more uncomfortable from here

onward into college, the military, trade school, or wherever each of you decides to go. You pushed through boring lecture, after boring lecture, and every single final that made you triple-check RogerHub the night before. Through failures, challenges, and successes — we grow. We grow through the empathetic nature of people in our lives and the relationships we seek out.

In the words of Eli Garcia, I'm the words of Taylor swift, "stay beautiful", cuz "I don't know about you, but I'm feelin' 22"

Thank you and Congratulations

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