

1,479 words = DRAFT #1
final draft was much shorter

Ryan Peabody
Valedictory Speech

It is truly an honor to be standing before you all tonight, my friends, classmates, family, my valued teachers, and Mr. Schuman. Mr. Schuman and I go back a ways so I'm allowed to say that don't worry. You know, ever since I was told that I was valedictorian I've been having dreams about this moment. Some bad, some good. There is something fundamentally different about tonight though in comparison with my dreams. Well for one, you all are fully-clothed, you don't have animal heads and angel wings, and hopefully I won't have to change my sheets when I'm done here. But in all seriousness, there is one fundamental difference between tonight and my dreams. In my dreams, we are told to move these cat toys from one side of our geometrically shaped hats to the other and I always feel the need to cry. But tonight I lack the urge to tear happy or sad. Now perhaps part of the reason is because I would never hear the end of it from my friends, especially Jonathan Lockwood who would love to give me a hard time about crying in front of so many people. So, for how many times I've told the story, Jonathan was walking up to the register in a gas station with a few of our friends and the cashier asked if they were all brothers to which Jonathan replied, "No, we're just REALLY good friends." Gotcha! Now, the best way to describe the real reason I do not feel the need to cry this evening is through the timeless words of Dr. Seuss. It was one of his quotations that I saw in Mr. Zannetti's class and it said, "Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened." Of course I am saddened by the fact that high school is ending for us tonight, but I smile because of all the great memories we've made. There are so many things that I'll never forget like who could forget rushing the field our sophomore year after winning holy bowl, or beating St. Francis in basketball this year. And none of us will forget the spirit that Josh Hammer and Richard Robey brought us as Captain Falcon and Blue Falcon. Personally, one of my fondest memories will always be doing the sandstorm dance with Kyle and Joey. And for all of you, I'm sure you all have your own memories that stick out to you; hanging out with friends on weekends, something funny that happened in class one day, or even just the little things that we do every day in the halls of CB. There are so many things that I think about that make me smile, so many in fact that I should be smiling all summer. And it would last even longer if I didn't have to go pursue a rigorous college education in the fall. And for the record, I am going to college. I'm sorry if you lost that bet. Now these memories are great. The dreams that we have lived out these past four years are wonderful, but these should not be the best four years of your life. That is something that I would not wish upon any of my enemies. If SATs, PLAN testing, college applications, and countless literature essays are the best four years of your life then you have done something wrong. So, class of 2012 I beg you to go out and make even more, greater memories. And while you're doing that, I ask you to remember these 6 things.

First, trust yourself. No one knows you better than yourself. It's up to you to dig deep, deep down and ask yourself who you want to be and what makes you happy. I'm not talking about what your parents, friends, coaches, or teachers want you to be, but who you want to be. Do what makes you happy. Don't give yourself to brutes who think they know what is best for you, who stick a finger in your face and tell you that you aren't good enough, because you are good enough. You are great and wonderful so don't ever lose track of who you are or stop being you. Do the things you want to do because at the end of the day it's your life and not theirs.

Secondly, don't ever be afraid to break the rules. Now I am not saying to break the law so please don't go do something completely illegal and cite me as your reasoning. It won't work.

But don't be afraid to step outside of the perceived boundaries every once in awhile. Society has so many pre-conceived notions about everything so don't be afraid to think outside of the box and go against some of these rules. How can you ever expect to be a true original or a maverick if you aren't willing to break the rules? After all, what is the point of being on this earth if all you want to do is be like everybody else is already? It's impossible to do something extraordinary if you are too well behaved or too structured to break the rules.

Which brings me to my next point: never be afraid of failure. Failure is inevitable. You can't expect to get anywhere without failing a few times. You won't always win, but you cannot be paralyzed by the fear of failure. So when you get knocked down, just get right back up and keep going. It's like what Rocky Balboa says to his son in the latest Rocky movie; "It ain't about how hard you hit. It's about how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward." You keep taking the hits and moving forward because you believe in yourself and in a new vision. You believe that success will eventually come so don't be afraid to fail.

This brings me to my fourth point which is don't listen to the doubters. How many times have you been told that you can't do this or you can't do that? It seems like that is almost all we hear nowadays. But I implore you to ignore those chants. Do not live in a world of "CAN'Ts" and "CANNOTs" but rather know that you are capable of anything you set your mind to. Personally I love it when people tell me that I can't do something because then it motivates me to go out and prove them wrong. Let us show the world that we are powerful beyond measure, for in the 17th chapter of St. Luke it is written that the Kingdom of God is within man; not one single man nor a group, but within all men. Within YOU! You have the power to make this life free and beautiful, to make it a wonderful adventure of memories. So remember that you are capable of anything you wish no matter what anyone else says or does to you.

This next point is probably the most important point of all. Work as hard as you can in everything that you do. Leave no stone unturned. The most important times to work hard are when it hurts the most, when it is the most difficult to apply yourself, because that's when it really counts. No pain, no gain. So while we're all off at school next year and we're partying and horsing around, someone else is working hard, getting smarter, and preparing themselves so just remember that. Now, I'm not saying to never go out and have a good time but just be mindful of the fact that work does need to get done eventually. Work hard then play later. If you want to be successful you must be willing to work hard.

And finally point number six. Give back to the community. None of your hard work is worth anything if you don't share it with anyone. During your day to day lives, always find time to give something back to your community, your state or your country. There is nothing enlightened about being selfish, so always be willing to share your success with others because there is nothing as rewarding as a life in service to others. Reaching out and helping people will give you more satisfaction than anything you have ever accomplished.

So, class of 2012, remember these six points as you begin your new lives tonight. Our class is special, we may not have the highest SAT scores, we may have the most NCAA division I athletes, but, class of 2012, as a prominent, high-flying hip hop musician once said, "We da' best!" And indeed we are, class of 2012. We are the future lawyers, doctors, and McDonald's

managers of America. So I leave by congratulating you all and not saying "here it ends" but rather by saying "and so it begins..." Thank you.

1088 words

Nic Domek
Salutatorian Speech 2012
Slow Down, Enjoy the Moment

Four years ago on a pleasant August evening, a group of nervous and excited teenagers, soon to be known as the Class of 2012, gathered at Christian Brothers High School for the famous Freshmen Lock In, where we all learned important life skills such as dancing, playing dodge-ball, and staying up all night. Lock In was the first of many great high school memories for our class, and it gave us a glimpse of what it means to be a Christian Brothers Falcon. At the time we probably didn't realize it, but we had just set out on a four-year journey filled with joyful memories, new friendships, difficult trials, and great achievements.

As we walked through the CB gates for our first day of high school donning our massive freshmen backpacks, we realized that we were no longer the top dogs on campus that we once were as 8th graders. It was a year of discovery for us. We discovered new friends, new interests, and new ideas. We discovered the tasty cafeteria food from Bob's kitchen, especially those delicious, greasy French fries. We showed off our awkward freshmen dance moves at our first Homecoming Dance, where I'm sure some of us were caught dancing a little too close to their partner by Mr. Havey's all-seeing flashlight. We also showed off our class's incredible Falcon Spirit as we went out to Hughes Stadium for our first Holy Bowl. Finally, the intense Every 15 Minutes Program taught us to take responsibility for our actions as we experienced the horrors of drunk driving. By the time Freshmen year concluded, we had become comfortable at Christian Brothers, but we were still young padawans and had much to learn.

As our high school journey continued Sophomore year, we began to settle into the CB lifestyle. We solidified our friend groups, became more actively involved in clubs and sports, and each found our niche in the CB community. We warmly welcomed the transfers from Loretto into our CB family, and they quickly and naturally molded into our class. As we came together as a class, we also came together as a school as we celebrated victory. That September, I don't think any of us will forget seeing our Varsity Football team defeat Jesuit and feeling the adrenaline as we stormed the field in victorious celebration. I believe that September night, we all learned what it truly felt to be a Falcon and to bleed red and blue. As

sophomore year came to a close, we were ready to rise to the ranks of the powerful upperclassmen.

When junior year finally did come, we didn't feel as powerful as we thought we would as difficult classes and heavy homework loads led to many late nights finishing math assignments, completing group projects at the last minute, or reading the spark notes for a novel we should have finished days ago. Junior year was indeed a difficult year as we struggled both to keep our grades up and to start preparing for our future college years. We went on college visits, listened to college reps, and took these two fun little tests called the SAT and the ACT. While it may seem like we worked all the time, we still found some time to have fun. We had a blast at our first upper division ball with DJ Hightop during a night full of crazy dancing, numerous pictures, and plenty of good looking people. As juniors, some of us had the opportunity to get involved in the KBFT Morning News television studio. Our class was quick to laugh at the mistakes and misfortunes of our KBFT anchors whenever they messed up, myself included. Well, actually I was flawless in front of the camera so you guys couldn't really laugh at me, but it's no big deal. After much hard work and sleepless nights, our Junior year at Christian Brothers at long last came to an end.

After three years of hard work and anticipation, our Senior year was finally upon us, and we were ready to sit back and relax. Unfortunately, there was little relaxing the first semester as we filled out college apps, wrote college essays, and went on our final college visits. Thankfully, we were able to find some stress relief on our Kairos retreats as we took a break for some reflection and renewal. Soon after those dreaded college apps were finished, Senioritis spread quickly through our class as the laziness and carelessness kicked in. Finally able to sit back and relax, we enjoyed our final memories together as the year neared its close. We laughed and cheered with Captain Falcon and Blue Falcon at the best rallies in CB history, we watched in awe as our Lady Falcons took down St. Francis at the Holy Hoops, we danced the night away at Arden Hills at our final Prom, and we showed off our awesome talent one last time at the Senior Open Mic Night. These memories, as well as countless others from our senior year, will remain with us as we move on to college and beyond.

Looking back at our class's past four years at Christian Brothers, we have grown together as a class and matured as individuals. When thinking about the Class of 2012, I believe that there are three characteristics that

make us stand out as an incredible group of people. First, the Class of 2012 is fun. Our class loves to have fun, knows how to have fun, and is a fun group of people to be around. Second, our class is an intelligent class of hardworking and creative people who know how to balance work and play. Finally, the Class of 2012 is an attractive class, GQ status. However, our attractiveness stems not only from our good looks, but even more so from our pure values and kind hearts.

As a class, we have definitely left a mark on the school. But more importantly, I believe that we have each left a mark on each other's lives. The friendships we've nurtured, the trials we've overcome, the goals we've accomplished, and the memories we've made together will live on as we each go our separate ways. During our time at CB, our class has grown from young and curious fledglings as freshmen into the mature and majestic falcons that we are today, ready to leave the nest of Christian Brothers and fly off into the vibrant sunset of the future. Thank you and congratulations to the Class of 2012.