

**Daniel Lee**  
**Salutatorian Speech**

In the words of Mr. Anderson, "there's a lot to say, but I don't know how to say it." Condensing four years of experiences, four years of laughs and tears, four years of caffeinated nights and groggy mornings, four years of friendship and love is no short order, and I know that whatever it is I say in the next four to five minutes will not even approach a level of adequacy. What we've shared transcends words, but I will do my very best to...well...not let you down.

So, consider this more of a love letter to the class of 2015, an ode, or a tribute to the incredible group of people I've come to know and be a part of.

Think back to where it all began. Most of us, including myself, cringe when we watch our lock-in video, and it's mostly because of the hair, but it was that night that the fire began; that's where the 250 of us came together for the first time. For the next few years, we fanned the flames. We grew closer, we created enduring friendships, we struggled through the same challenges, we made all of the other classes look bad. And this year especially, we came together to be something much

more than just a class, much more than just a group of students in the same classrooms and standing in the same hallway at break. Especially through Kairos, we became each other's support system, and each other's confidants. Calling ourselves "a class" just doesn't seem to cut it.

In the process of writing this speech, I took on the hopeless task of trying to characterize what we are in a single word, in the hope that it would be poetic or something, or that it would help me to express the way I felt. And I came pretty close, too, I think. I thought of "conglomerate," "congregation," "Wolfpack," or maybe even a "family." But I think the closest I got was a "unit." And if you're starting to question my aptitude even to be up here right now, I don't blame you, but please bear with me. I think "unit" is the perfect descriptor of our class, not only because of its emphasis on our value and merit as a cohesive whole, but because of the way it's spelled: you can't spell "unit" without U N I. The T is also paramount, but for time's sake, we're going to ignore it. And that's what the Class of 2015 is all about: we are much greater than the sum of our parts. While we are gifted athletes, impeccable artists, accomplished academicians on our own, we shine brightest when we are together, as one unit.

\*scoffs at self\*

So, clearly, we cannot be confined to a word. But, perhaps an anecdote...

The time is March of our junior year. The place: the Rosen Plaza Hotel in Orlando, Florida. We were in the home stretch of the Sweet 16: a 16-hour long broadcast journalism competition known to test the limits of our abilities, our teamwork, and, frankly, our sanity. However, things had gone uncharacteristically well that year, so, naturally, the main computer responsible for compiling our final project, a machine that we affectionately refer to as Moe, **crashed** in the final moments.

And in case you're wondering how we felt, it was like:

- Paul Pierce hitting a game-tying-3 a tenth of a second after the buzzer sounded
- Falling asleep in Mr. English's class and having him yell in your ear abruptly
- Eating too many hot wings and immediately regretting it

To clarify, it didn't feel good.

As we trudged back to our rooms, shoulders drooping low, Patrick Bell, or 'pattyice' as he seems to prefer, turned to address the group, and he said something in that

moment that I know everyone was far too upset to hear, but something I would not soon forget:

He said, "You guys, I have never been more proud to know you."

And that's really the only way to articulate accurately the way I feel right now. I have never been more proud to know a group of people than I am to know you, the Class of 2015.\* It has been a privilege.

Before I conclude, a few thank you's are in order. Thank you to all of our family and friends for providing us with endless love and support. Thank you to the faculty and staff of Christian Brothers High School for guiding us throughout this journey. Thank you to Patrick Bell and Mr. Anderson, for essentially writing a pivotal portion of my speech *for me*. And, most importantly, thank you to the class of 2015, not only for providing me with the incredible and undeserved honor of speaking before you tonight, but for being models of faith, respect, and love inside and outside of our community. So, as we go our separate ways in a matter of just a few months, I have absolute confidence that you will continue to be the individuals that you've become here at Christian Brothers -- and that, alone, will take you far.

Work hard, play hard, don't be a mental midget, stay on that grind, swing away, live the fourth, and don't forget the times we've had here.

Congratulations to you all.