

Valedictory Address | Class of 2003

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When I applied to come to Augustine College I was given an assignment – the first of many. I was to write a short essay on a quote by Francis Bacon, in which he separates books into three categories: those to be simply tasted, those to be chewed, and those to be swallowed and digested. As I was thinking about the last eight months I suddenly realized that these descriptions apply just as aptly to experiences as to books.

Some moments in life pass quickly and are forgotten. Others stay with us a little longer. And then there are those that will remain with us to be pondered and mulled over for years to come. Augustine has been one of the enriching experiences that will never fade away. If I were never to pick up another book or speak to another person for the rest of my life, this year would have provided me with ample food for thought. And yet, it hasn't been the sort of experience that makes me feel as though I have had too much. I'm currently so overwhelmed by the flood of new ideas that I ought to be unable to absorb any more. And yet, instead of being full to overflowing, I find myself craving more: more books, more conversations, more ideas.

It will take some time to thoroughly digest all that I've learned this year, but the process of considering and examining all of this information will, I believe, fulfill the purpose of learning as Jesus described it: to bring forth both new and old from the treasure-stores of our minds and hearts.

This year has undoubtedly made enormous contributions to the intellectual treasures stored up by each student. It seems as though we've covered the history of the whole world in these

last eight months. We have studied the rise and fall of the Roman Empire, the great gothic cathedrals of the Middle Ages, and the basic tenets of quantum physics. The theories of special and general relativity and the contrapuntal harmonies of the Baroque period are a little clearer to us now and our shower walls are a testament to a somewhat improved Latin vocabulary. We have learned to identify a glurk, although you'll have to ask Dr. Hunter for a detailed description, and every one of us would recognize a shrieking nymph on first hearing. These things will, I am sure, prove invaluable to us in the future.

There have, however, been subtler and more important lessons learned this year. We have learned to think and read critically, to question information and to consider the truth not only of a final conclusion but also of the premises upon which an argument is made. The value of wisdom over knowledge has become increasingly evident as we have seen both displayed in the lives and teaching of our professors. The body of knowledge that we have received has enabled us to begin to view the world through the lens of history. It has given us the ability to look at the world critically and yet to love it: not, as Oscar Wilde said, in all its tainted glory, but for the perfect beauty and flawless design that once characterized creation. We have seen God's hand in history and, in light of that, are able to see his work in the world today.

The Westminster Catechism says that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. Augustine College has definitely prepared us to serve that purpose. We have learned that the Christian faith is not an

unreasonable fairy tale. Rather, it is a belief system that can be rationally subscribed to and defended. We have been prepared to serve the Lord with all of our minds and all of our hearts, and to see his beautiful plan in the world around us. All of these things will remain with us as we go out into our various worlds.

We thank our professors for bringing us to this point; your patience, passion, and encouragement have been very precious to us. We also want to thank those who have been with us before and

throughout this year: our parents, friends, and family. Your love and prayers have kept us going. Finally, thank and praise the Lord for helping us to make it through! He has brought us here and he will take us on in the future. To my classmates, I have got one final word for you – fittingly, a quote from Professor Patrick: Think, read, and speak as truthfully as you can; the rest is in God’s hands. God bless!

Thank you.