

Valedictory Address | Class of 2004

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Salvete!

In order to appropriately place Augustine College among the finest and most prestigious learning institutions of our day I have decided to follow in the tradition of Harvard University up until the 1970s and give this valedictory address entirely in Latin - ... just kidding!

Do not think, however, that my avoidance of Latina Lingua in this address represents a lessened esteem for the educational experience found at Augustine College. Rather, I hold the learning of this year to be more dear than all of my undergraduate and medical-school education. What? Surely not! A few courses in history, a smattering of the arts, and a class in a dead language?

What is it that is so unique about this experience? As the class of 2004 we must now ask what our year at Augustine College has given us.

Well, we can first answer what it has not given us. It has not given any one of us a degree. It has not trained us for a job. It has not given us any money (except for Joel, who shovelled snow for the church here at ten dollars an hour). Many of us will receive no educational credit at all for our year at Augustine and for those who do the entire experience will be reduced to a few meager Liberal Arts credits.

So we must ask ourselves what we have learned from our year at Augustine.

Well, the most obvious thing we have learned is history. We have questioned with Socrates, bandied words with Cicero. We have journeyed the scriptures with Augustine, Aquinas, and Luther. We have marvelled at creation with

Newton and Einstein. We have been humbled with Rembrandt. We have rejoiced with Bach and Messiaen. But we have not learned history as the modern university teaches it: as disconnected facts, lives, events, and ideas with no relationship, no relevance to one another, no relevance for us today. Rather, we have learned that history is a story, our story, each character, event, and plot line playing into all the others. We have seen the convergence of cultures and ideas, the deep interplay of philosophy and science, music and mathematics, theology and art. For us these very categories have become inadequate: lines begin to blur. For the human story does not fit into the subjects, the boxes of the modern classroom.

In pursuing an integrated view of history we have come to realize our indebtedness to our own history; that we owe our current understanding of ourselves and the world to our forbearers: the questions they asked and the answers they found. We see our faith in theirs. Their sins have become our own.

All of this our professors have taught us. They have opened our eyes to the fundamental importance of history. Yet their true gift to us, the gift of this year at Augustine College, is more central, more fundamental. The modern world of academia would have us believe that knowledge is neutral and independent of our beliefs; that learning and faith should remain separate. But we have seen that what you believe is critical to what you can understand. Our faith, our belief in the self-revelation of God, can, indeed must, inform our every pursuit. Proverbs 9:10 states, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." God is the source of all truth.

Jesus Christ unifies all knowledge. He is the Author of history and has written himself into the storyline, the main character in a passion play of his own composition. In the light of the cross all else comes into focus. As such St. Augustine, after whom this college is named, tells us, “seek not to understand so that you may believe, but believe that you may understand.”

In light of what we have learned this year at Augustine College I want to urge each of my classmates, do not let this year pass and be forgotten. Rather, pursue the vision of learning that we have here begun. Our culture will encourage you to engage in mediocrity; the modern university will tempt you to treat learning as the accumulation of unrelated facts to be crammed, regurgitated, and forgotten. Do not give in to this.

Keep your minds diligent and your hearts set on Christ. He does not bestow gifts needlessly; the

gift of learning we have received this year must not be squandered. In a world that has lost its way, denies its Christian heritage, and rejects its Saviour, we are to be the speakers of truth.

Finally, I urge you to remember the example of our professors, men and women who for little, or sometimes no, remuneration judged it necessary to pass on the wisdom that God has granted them. We should strive, within the body of Christ, to pass on the vision of Augustine College, to awaken our churches from their intellectual slumber, and to ignite the minds of the redeemed.

Thank you to all who supported us prayerfully and financially this year. Thank you again to the professors who gave so much of their time and wisdom. Finally, we thank our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who redeems our intellects as well as our souls and calls all to be given unto His service.