

Mary Kate Moriarty

Valedictory Speech

27 May, 2023

### Saint Francis DeSales High School Valedictory Speech

Hello everyone, and welcome. Welcome to the high school graduation of Saint Francis DeSales Class of 2023. To say that it is a unique honor to speak to each one of my classmates and their loved ones on this special day is an understatement. I am filled with gratitude and pride to be afforded this opportunity. I would like to first welcome our wonderful principal, Mr. Dan Garrick, the incredible group of administrators here with us today, our school board president, Mr. Doug Heil, and every parent and loved one. Thank you to each of these individuals for making this day possible and leading the Class of 2023 through the past four years. Furthermore, I owe endless thanks to my loving parents, my siblings, Corey and Bridget, each of my closest friends, and the teachers that have become my greatest mentors. Thank you for bringing me to this day through your endless support and unconditional love. But, most especially, thank you to my classmates. Over the last four years, you have created the most loving family I could have imagined and a feeling of home and togetherness that is found nowhere else. It is a pleasure to see each of you here today, and to share just a little bit of how you have shaped my experience as a member of the Class of 2023.

I want to first start by taking a trip down memory lane, starting way back with freshman year. I can confidently say that each and every one of us has changed greatly since freshman year, and not just because we hardly resemble our freshman year selves. Each of us has developed into our own selves, whether it be in how we look, how we act, how we are a friend to others, how we learn, or how we love. I do not want to try and compare how high school

shaped each one of us, because not one experience was the same for anybody. But, there is no doubt that we have been shaped, that we have grown, and also that we have a lot more growing to do. Freshman year, our school's theme was "Hope Lives Here." This was a very fitting theme for us. Many of us **hoped** for our first date to homecoming, an "A" in Mrs. Kade's theology class, more playing time on our sports teams, and new friendships. But, we also experienced **hope** in the harder times, when we lost someone close to us and found comfort in the DeSales community, or when we faced the start of a global pandemic and had to quickly adjust in every way. These difficult times of struggle led us to **hope** for the future and for the good times that we were sure to experience. So, my first wish for each of you is that you continue to find hope in all of the places life will bring you and in every person you will meet.

Alright, now for our second stop down memory lane: Sophomore year. Sophomore year was a bit of a blur altogether, because majority of the year took place through an iPad screen or separated from half of our class. Sophomore year, 2020, the year of COVID, was without a doubt interesting for each of us. We had to learn how to wear a mask, how to use Zoom, how to motivate ourselves to wake up on our "mobile" days, and how to trust Bob Marley in that, "everything is gonna be alright." But, we also had to learn how to go to school and only see half of our friends, how to communicate and spend time with the other half, and how to juggle all the other effects of the pandemic. Sophomore year, the school theme was "Rise by Loving." This year presented challenges to each of us that we were completely unfamiliar with, but we had no other choice than to rise. We had to **rise** to do our best in school. We had to **rise** to maintain our friendships and relationships. We had to **rise** to maintain an optimistic mindset. The entire year, we rose, and I think the motivation was indeed, love. Each of us had something that we loved, whether it was actually coming to school and learning (I know, that probably sounds crazy), or

maybe it was seeing a certain friend, or hearing the best stories from a certain teacher (most likely Mr. Dvorak). It was these moments of love that motivated us to rise above the challenges sophomore year brought. So, my second wish for each of you is that you continue to find those small moments of love that will allow you to rise to the challenges that life will inevitably throw your way.

Now, the third stop on this trip down memory lane: Junior year. Junior year was exciting, but also a little bit nerve racking in many ways. Junior year was tough for a lot of us, and required more work than we were used to in past years. But, it was also difficult because junior year was really the beginning of the end. Junior year was the year that each of us started looking more at our futures, what we wanted to do, who we wanted to be, and how we were going to get there. Some members of our class had already committed to colleges for sports, others had started the big college search. But, through all of these new challenges, there was a great amount of joy that came from junior year, because we were finally moving **forward**. This leads me to the theme junior year, “Forward with Faith.” What a perfect theme for our class of juniors, because we got the joyous experience of moving **forward** from COVID, moving **forward** to the “normal” year that we had missed for so long. But, we also began to move **forward** with what we wanted our futures to look like. So, I found that the only way to answer all of the overwhelming questions that each of us probably faced was through faith. Having faith in ourselves, faith in our classmates, faith in our teachers, and faith in our futures is what led us **forward**, slowly but surely. Whenever any of you feel stuck or worried about the future, just remember Sister Monique’s song and simply “go forward with faith.” That leads me to my third wish for you all: I wish that each of you continue to rely on your faith in order to move forward, but also, to focus on the present while you still have it.

Last, but most certainly not least, the fourth and final stop on this unique trip down memory lane: Senior year. Senior year is full of lasts: last dances, last football Friday nights, last senior nights, last musicals, last walks in the courtyard, and last times seeing all the people we have gone to school with for four years of our lives. I am so incredibly thankful to every single one of you because not only did you make my “lasts” unforgettable, but you were the people who were there since the “firsts.” You were the people who experienced all of the “in-between” with me. The final theme for our class is “God is Indeed Here.” This theme could not be more true for my experience at Saint Francis DeSales, but especially, for senior year. This year, I have seen God here every day. I have seen God here through the support that each of us gives to one another, and through the support that our teachers have given us along the way. I have seen God here through the paths that are being set up for each person. I have seen God here through the relationships that have formed. Finally, I have seen God here through all of you. Four years ago, Mr. Garrick challenged our class to leave the school better than we found it. It is clear to me that each one of you has exceeded this goal beyond imagination. Each member of our class has helped shape the group that we joined four years ago, and now the group we are leaving behind today. There is no doubt in my mind that God has indeed been here all along. So, finally, my fourth wish for you all: I wish that each of you continue to recognize that God will indeed always be with you on your journey, and to remember that your journey has just begun. Congratulations Class of 2023, and Go Stallions!