

2006 VALEDICTORY ADDRESS

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The College of the Holy Cross. Our home for the last four years. After reflecting upon the events and circumstances that led us to this college on a hill, to this Holy Cross community, to this very moment, I cannot help but conclude that we were meant for no other path. Whether you prefer to call it fate, destiny, or my personal favorite, God's grace, I can fathom no other explanation to rationalize the unforgettable journey each of us has taken from matriculation to this day of graduation. It was all meant to be.

During our all too brief college journeys, we have transformed from teenagers filled with Hollywood-inspired fantasies of newfound autonomy and its associated pleasures to men and women dedicated to justice and service. Our volunteer work within the Worcester community as tutors and mentors to inner-city youths, surrogate grandchildren to the elderly, and friends to the homeless and sick, has impacted thousands of lives, the lives of those who have been forgotten or ignored by our increasingly egocentric society. For this, we should be proud. But what I have discovered through my own participation in such activities is that I have gained so much more insight from my weekly tutoring sessions with the boys of the Nativity School than I could have possibly dispensed. We have sacrificed countless hours in the service of others, fostering hope and promoting peace, but we must also recognize what we have in turn received: the gifts of humility, solidarity, and joy cultivated in our own hearts. Let us heed the words of the German theologian Albert Schweitzer, who wrote: "I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I do know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve." Therefore, let us perpetuate the acts of service we have cultivated here as students and

incorporate them into our new roles as teachers, doctors, lawyers, business men and women, and the myriad other professions in which we will engage in the future.

If you are at all like me, you once fantasized about your college graduation as an initial benchmark toward adulthood, but have more recently dreaded this day for the same reason. As frightening as the journey forth into the unknown future might be, we can take comfort knowing that we are fully prepared for the rigors of graduate school or the daily grind of the working world. From our earliest days, our parents have instilled in us the moral compasses with which we have navigated the sometimes uncertain seas of college life. The dedication, passion, and mentorship of our professors has imparted in us a wide breadth of knowledge true to a liberal arts education and, more importantly, the analytical skills that will prove to be invaluable in our collective quest for the truth. And our friends, which seems like such an inadequate description for the ones who have glimpsed our souls, those with whom we have shared tears and laughter, the people who have accepted us despite our inexplicable obsessions with *The O.C.* Though we may briefly part ways today as we each face what God has planned for us, the friendships forged here will sustain us for the rest of our lives.

The College of the Holy Cross. Our soon-to-be alma mater, quite literally our nourishing mother. The place where we have experienced so much joy that it is difficult to believe that it can get any better than this. The prospect of life beyond this campus is incomprehensible. In four short years, we have experienced love and loss, victory and defeat, hope and sadness, faith and doubt. This is the place where we have come to understand both the world around us and our unique roles within society. As a result of the intellectual, interpersonal, and spiritual obstacles surmounted, we have discovered our true selves, with all our passions and dreams for the future. At times, the process of self-discovery has been painful, forcing us to stand alone, or to question our most deep-

seated beliefs. But without such searching, without the struggle to find our voices amidst the ever-present urge to conform, we would now be unable to face tomorrow with the certainty of our convictions and the paths we have been called to pursue henceforth. It was all meant to be.

So, fellow graduates, cherish the memories ingrained not only in your minds but also in your hearts, and remember that Holy Cross will always remain here, patiently awaiting our eventual return, holding open its doors for us as we have been known to do for each other on occasion. Bleed purple, and forever remain crusaders dedicated to the pursuit of peace, justice, and happiness.