

Today is a great day to look back over the last four years. I find it particularly significant because I began my service as president with the arrival of the Class of 2024. We were new together and we traversed many experiences. I will always have a special place in my heart for you.

I always like to remind the graduates that although this ceremony highlights what you have completed, *commencement* literally means beginning and indicates that the purpose of this ceremony is to mark a new beginning rather than an end. Yes, it is the end of your 4 years at MSJA – and, at the same time, it is a new beginning. We’re celebrating the start of a new chapter in your lives. The end of your studies is also the beginning of something new.

So let us *muse* for a few moments. Pun intended. The literary magazine (*The Muse*) focused on *metamorphosis* this year and reminded us that there is nothing permanent except change. As we have already heard in many diverse ways, as a class and individually you have experienced incredible and profound change over your high school years. You have experienced transformation. Faithful to ‘educating founders’ Mount Saint Joseph Academy has shaped you and empowered you to be agents of transformation wherever you find yourself.

It all starts with a new beginning. What allowed you to grow over these years? I imagine not seeing the whole road ahead of you was daunting. Because you could not see the destination you faithfully took the steps along the journey. Perhaps you felt things you never felt before or saw things that you had never seen. Maybe you even heard words and experienced sounds that seemed to change everything. You have had experiences that caused you to grow.

It is so clear looking back, that once you start, things begin to take shape – the abstract becomes concrete; what you dreamed of becomes reality; breathtaking change takes place filling you with awe. In the movie, *Cabrini*, the Italian immigrant Mother Cabrini, despite all obstacles, notes, “begin the mission and the means will come.” Maybe, just maybe, some of the things you only dreamed of as a freshman have become a reality and things that you never even gave a thought to have found a way to be fulfilled.

But let’s face it. The growing pains were scary. While they were transformative and ultimately, they helped you to reach your fullest potential, these growing pains

brought tears, anxiety, confusion, missteps, fear and sometimes even failure. But they also brought growth and finally fruitfulness. Transformation.

Despite all the obstacles and challenges, you survived; transformation lead you to new opportunities; change opened you to all kinds of new things.

You were transformed through this experience because you are every much loved. Loved? Loved by a God who has called you by name and gifted you with family, friends, faculty and so many more who are there for you even when you can't see or feel the love and support. Sometimes the love and support are hidden and unidentifiable in the moment. And sometimes, they are so close to you, you can hardly notice and appreciate the support and growth. Your minds were being challenged; your hearts were being stretched; your faith was being tested. You were growing silently and significantly during this time.

When we come to the end of a road, we can look forward in hope. Every end is a new beginning.

***Go with pride,  
For you have reached a goal.  
Go with hope,  
For the future is bright with promise.  
Go with a grateful heart,  
For many have contributed to your success.  
Go with a bit of regret,  
For you leave something of yourself behind you.  
Go with peace,  
With love, with joy  
And with our prayers for  
All your tomorrows.***