Reflection Speech, Mila Fanjul ‘25

Good Evening, Mrs. Gillingham-Rivas, Mr. Coyle, Sr. Taylor, the members of the Board of Trustees, Mrs. Consuegra, Dr. Larrea, faculty, staff, family, and undeniably the MOST courageous and confident Class of 2025.

When I began writing this reflection, I was trying to write a blend of a Saturday Night Live Skit and a Harvard Commencement speech. Quite frankly, I was struggling, and it was not until my ring sister (and now pin sister) Angie Membiela, asked me “Mila, are you trying to make the speech funny because that is what is expected of you, or are you making it funny to cover up how you are truly feeling?” And she was right. So here’s a little bit of funny, but really a whole lot of feeling.

This is not any ordinary graduation; this is a graduation from a Sacred Heart school. However, in an effort to not repeat a Saint Madeleine Sophie or Saint Rose Philippine quote, the engraving on our class ring, or the story of Mater, I looked to the one Sacred Heart thing I haven’t heard much about, our school logo: an open heart. When I look at that heart, I think of it in motion. I think of it as a heart that was so full of love that it couldn’t contain itself and burst open. But that made me wonder what could fill a heart so much that it bursts open?

So, as someone who loves math and organization, I decided to break down a Carrollton graduate's heart into 5 sections to properly identify the cause of the burst.

First Section.
To me, from the moment you are created, your heart is automatically 100% filled with God's love. Although His love is omnipresent, if there's one thing Carrollton has taught me it is that God does not scream, He whispers very, very quietly. Thus, it is only in the silence that you can hear Him. And yes, it is so easy to hear Him in a place like this, or around the campfire of a retreat house, or in the time allotted for Him out of every school day. But as we walk into the future, it won't be that easy, so let us not forget to take time to listen to and thank the only one to whom we owe it all. Now, I said earlier that God's love fills your heart completely, but for the sake of my extended metaphor, let's say that God's love accounts for about 51% of the heart.

51% full, and one step closer to bursting.

Second Section.

Your parents are the second beings in your life to love you, so to the parents. Everything we are today, we owe to you. Now, I can't speak

for my classmates, but I am painfully aware of the fact that I have never properly thanked my parents for the sacrifices they have made, the love they have shown to me, and the gift of a Carrollton education. Thank you for this opportunity, not only because it is where you can find incredible academics, but also because it's where I have found my best friends and where I have found God. I hope to show you both through my words and my actions how grateful I truly am.

I would say our parents fill up about another 20%.
Total: 71% full, and one more step to bursting.

Third Section.
For those of us who have siblings, from the moment we are brought home for the first time or from the moment they were born, our siblings have had a huge effect on molding us into the people we are today, so I would say each sibling fills up about 2.5% of our hearts, so Tom and Jack between both of you, that's about 5%. To the siblings, thank you for your crazy stories, your dance moves, your listening ears, your daily advice, but most importantly, at least in my case, thank you for tackling me down to teach me to always get back up again (both metaphorically and literally).

Total: 76% full, and just a little closer to the bursting point.

Fourth Section.

Whether at Carrollton or not, from the moment you start school, your teachers become sort of school parents. So, to the teachers. Thank you for *caring*. Of course, in the academic way through office hours, cell theory dances, brain break yoga, pictures of your cats on the powerpoints, and the best nerdy math jokes. But also thank you for caring in all those non-academic ways, for handshakes, fist bumps, and smiles in the hallways, for the inside jokes, and for being so much more than a teacher, but a sanctuary. In a more real sense, though, thank you for the tears: for the humbling freshman year summer assignment tests, for the 67s on every history essay, for the impossible-to-understand Spanish audios, and for every other challenge you gave us, not because you wanted to fail us, but because you wanted to strengthen us. We are the luckiest of students, because when teaching is just loving, then learning is just reciprocating.
I would say teachers fill about 10%.

Total: 86% full give or take, and so, so close to bursting open like the heart.

So I stopped there and I asked myself, “What does it take, what makes that heart explode open?” So, I looked a little closer at that number 86%. Ironic isn’t it? I happen to have 86 classmates sitting in front of me right now, but they’re not just classmates they’re…

86 distinct laughs that I can recognize in an instant.
86 friendships that I cannot *and will not* bear to lose.
86 gifts that I do not deserve, but am so lucky to have.
Simply 86 sisters.

Everyone always says that, though, when you come to Carrollton your classmates become your sisters. Sometimes, when you hear a phrase so many times, it loses its meaning. But I know what makes the Class of 2025 *really* sisters, it's that we're crazy about each other.

We're crazy when we started a revolution during freshman welcome week, we're crazy for the Bella Peacock-Edwardina drama, we're crazy enough to make an edit of all our Ring Ceremony flops, and we're so crazy that we even shattered the window of a greyhound bus at 1am on a class trip. And I must say, thank goodness we are crazy, because that makes for the most interesting of memories.

But here's the truth: I may not have a sister, but from what I've heard, it doesn't seem easy. So, I'm not going to sugar-coat things. Yes, there are times when you are upset with your classmates, which makes that metaphor even more beautiful. A real sister loves you no matter what because you are connected by something much greater than yourselves—the love of your parents, your shared experience, or your faith. So yes, I can confidently say you are all my sisters, in all our

gifts and all our shortcomings, because we are connected by something greater than ourselves. So to my 86 sister I think I would allocate at least another 86%, and I don't need to do the math to know that it now totals to way more than 100. However, to me, the heart isn't bursting yet, it's just very, very full.

Class of 2025, I would like you to do something for me right now. Look at the people in this room, look at your parents, look at your sisters beside you, now look at your teachers, and now take a moment to look at where you are sitting. You are sitting in a beautiful church in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. Right now, you are in one room with every single section of your very, very full heart, and *this* is the last time that will *ever* happen again.

So let me just say this, in case I don't get to say it to you later this evening. I'm going to miss each and every one of you like crazy, and I am STRUGGLING to say goodbye. But, I take comfort in knowing that you're going to do great things and I know I will see you again in LinkedIn searches, on campaign trails, in doctor's offices, on the sidelines of our kids' soccer games, as a SHARK on Shank Tank, at the opening of your gallery, in the flash of my ring, and in memories I may not remember, but will never forget.

Oh, and I think I finally figured out what it takes to open that heart. It takes the courage to leave. It takes strength to walk confidently into

tomorrow, knowing it is our responsibility to share our love just as freely as it was given to us.

I love you and I have nothing else to say except that it is time to begin.

Thank you.