

Convocation  
St. Bonaventure's College  
June 25, 2017

Greetings to the Board of Governors of the College, Mr. President, principal, faculty and staff, parents and family members, and especially today, our award winners and graduating class of 2017.

I am delighted to have been invited to address you on this very special occasion, the commencement ceremony for the graduating class of 2017 and the Senior High Awards ceremony.

Certainly this is a day filled with many emotions.

There is indeed a sense of personal best and great accomplishment as you finish this stage of your Educational pursuits.

Parents and family members are beaming with joy today! This is an important milestone for them; seeing their child and loved one attaining this level of achievement.

I imagine for them, it is not so long ago that they remember bringing you as a child to your first day of school and entrusting you to the guidance of their teachers in partnership with them to guide and lead you in directions that will best benefit your lives.

Can you recall your first day of school? Think back – can you remember the sights and sounds, your feelings, your apprehensions, your hopes...

You have encountered many people along the way of your school life. I am sure each of you has fond memories of special friends, special teachers, special events and times.

I can assure you that your family wanted the very best educational opportunities for you.

Hopes, dreams and a world of opportunity were certainly wished for you and today, this is no different.

We look forward with hope to future opportunities to support the unique, special God given talents that each have been given and are growing with.

Today, before us we see a wonderful group of young men and women, highly accomplished and filled with hope and enthusiasm for all future opportunities which await for each of you.

Many hands supported you along the way.

As alluded to, your parents and family were your first teachers. They wanted the very best for you and mentored and supported you throughout the many stages of your school years.

Along with your family, the special relationship between home and school is essential in the development of children, at all stages.

Your teachers, by the very nature of their very profession, have taken great delight in your personal growth.

Besides teaching you knowledge of the disciplines you have studied, they have had your very best interests at heart and have helped each of you find and nourish your skills and talents. So too, like your family, they have watched you develop in your relationships with yourself and others.

You have been encouraged at school to learn and experience life's valuable lessons: learning from failure, being free to make mistakes and bettering yourself from them, being truthful and honest in your dealings with others, caring for the needs of your brothers and sisters throughout the global

community, seeking socially just initiatives, and in short, the need to care for yourself, your fellow human beings, and the needs of your world.

These lessons are essential to learn and it is with great pride that the whole St. Bonaventure's community, parents, board members, administrators and teachers, and in a special way today, members of the graduating class, strive for at all times.

Today is a day for celebration. Today, we formally recognize your achievements as you prepare to go out into the world on your next adventure.

Graduates, we need you, your accomplishments skills and talents in our world today.

Our world faces many challenges. We only have to look at media sources to see the challenges facing us all, your generation in particular.

I'd like to reflect on two of these a little with you: Namely, Ecological and Environmental issues and the use of Technology in the world today.

Perhaps one of the most pressing concerns for us today is a need for all of us to care for the environment and deepen our sense of ecology.

Just a few short weeks ago, I had opportunity, along with other Canadian Atlantic Bishops, to visit with Pope Francis in Rome. This was truly a great experience to dialogue with the Holy Father about the needs of the Church and the world.

Francis has certainly captured much attention on the world stage since becoming the Holy Father.

In his recent writing, **Laudato Si**, Pope Francis has given us much to think about when speaking about Ecology and the Environment. Let's reflect a little on his words to the world.

### **The opening line of his text, quotes from St. Francis of Assisi**

“LAUDATO SI’, mi’ Signore” – “Praise be to you, my Lord”. In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. “Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs”.

This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her.

We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she “groans in travail” (Rom 8:22). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters. (1-2)

Pope Francis calls all us to care for our environment in an urgent fashion. I encourage you to reflect on his messages in his encyclical. Particularly, he calls on us to

### **Discover God in all things**

The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely. Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person’s face. The ideal is not only to pass from the

exterior to the interior to discover the action of God in the soul, but also to discover God in all things.

Saint Bonaventure teaches us that “contemplation deepens the more we feel the working of God’s grace within our hearts, and the better we learn to encounter God in creatures outside ourselves”. (223)

There is much to reflect on here in these words.

Along with Environmental issues, technological issues confront us today. Our world has changed drastically at an exceptionally fast pace. Just think about the changes that have taken place in the past five years since you were in junior high school.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century witnesses the digital, technological era. Information and data continues to explode. Your generation has access to technologies hardly dreamed about just a few short years ago.

We have to reflect on how we best use these tools, for they are, in effect, tools.

On June 8 of this year, Tim Cook, the current CEO of Apple, one of the largest technological corporations, recently had this to say to MIT graduates:

*If we are ever going to solve some of the hardest problems still facing the world today—everything from cancer, to climate change, to educational inequality—then technology will help us do it.*

*But technology alone isn't the solution. Sometimes, it's part of the problem. Last year I had the chance to meet with Pope Francis. It was the most incredible meeting of my life. This is a man who has spent more time comforting the afflicted in slums than he has with heads of state. This may surprise you, but he knew an unbelievable amount about technology.*

*It was obvious to me that he had thought deeply about it—its opportunities, its risks, its morality. What he said to me in*

*that meeting—what he preached, really—was on a topic we care a lot about at Apple. But he expressed a shared concern in a powerful new way. “Never has humanity had such power over itself, yet nothing ensures that it will be used wisely,” he has said.*

*Technology today is integral to almost all aspects of our lives and, most of the time, it’s a force for good. And yet, the potential adverse consequences are spreading faster and cutting deeper than ever before. Threats to our security. Threats to our privacy. Fake news. And social media that becomes anti-social. Sometimes the very technology that is meant to connect us divides us.*

*Technology is capable of doing great things, but it doesn’t want to do great things. It doesn’t want anything. That part takes all of us. It takes our values, and our commitment to our family, our neighbors, our communities. Our love of beauty and belief that all our fates are*

*interconnected. Our decency. Our kindness.*

Just as there are many challenges facing us today, there are many opportunities and dreams for each of you to explore in your life.

Nurtured by your family, school and community, dream big!

Make the best of every opportunity, use your time, skill and talent, always do your best, seize opportunity!

As the Roman poet Horace put it...Carpe Diem – seize the day!

Your education and lessons learned here at this St. Bonaventure's community have given you the best to be your very best in all opportunities that lie ahead of you.

Care for yourself, care for others, care for your world.

I read about a talk once given to college graduates that is very applicable to each of us, especially our graduates today.

George Saunders, addressing the class at Syracuse University told students to

“Err in the direction of kindness. Do those things that incline you toward the big questions, and avoid the things that would reduce you and make you trivial. That luminous part of you that exists beyond personality — your soul, if you will — is as bright and shining as any that has ever been. Bright as Shakespeare’s, bright as Gandhi’s, bright as Mother Teresa’s. Clear away everything that keeps you separate from this secret luminous place. Believe it

exists, come to know it better, nurture it, share its fruits tirelessly."

Lastly, I would like to leave you with this message.

Remember, above all else:

You are God's precious child. Your God is madly in love with each of you, wanting the very best for you. Always remember that in every future challenge and opportunity, God is there. Continue to search and grow in your love of God through his Son, Jesus our brother, and through God's Holy Spirit.

My congratulations to each of you today. My prayer for you is that by drawing on your education, may you be the great person God wishes for you to be as you live your lives with hope, truth, kindness, love of neighbour and the world. Make the world a better place

because of your uniqueness, talents, and presence.

Thank you all once again for having me address these few short words to the St. Bonaventure's community and to our graduating class of 2017.

May God bless each one of you on this special day and all days.