

Marist College Baccalaureate Graduation Speech

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Members of Marist College, its community, and of course the graduating class of 2012, congratulations for making it to this day and thank you for the honor of being able to speak.

I imagine that everyone here today has a unique and amazing story about how they made it to be sitting in this audience about to receive their diplomas. Today, I would like to shortly share mine, but more than just sharing my story, I hope that it shows the different walks of a life a Marist student can come from and the openness of this College to educate everyone no matter what stage of their life they are in.

In my case, I started my college education when I was 21 years old. As many of you in the audience can probably relate, I was not ready to start college when most students were happily packing up and moving into their freshman dorms. So instead of doing something that didn't feel right, I decided to take a year off and do some self-exploration and growing up. I joined a 1 year missionary program called Generation Peace Academy that traveled across the US to do service projects and 43 states and 4 years post high school, I was ready to get my professional education and start my career.

However, even with a more developed sense of self, graduating Marist is not an achievement that I, or really any of us, can claim solely as our own victory. As shown through the "Putting Him/Her Through" stole (I'm not sure if I was the only one, but I had a hard time just picking 1 person!), it took the support and love of those around us to help us push through and not give up. And this leads to the 1 insight that I had that I would like to share with you today. Becoming a college graduate, and even post graduate and beyond, is never really just a personal accomplishment- it quite literally takes a whole "village" to raise a graduate. Today, I would like to recognize 3 groups of my "village" that helped raise me up and successfully complete my degree.

The first group of people that "raised me up" was my family. I think that I can speak for almost everyone here today in saying that our families were the backbones in our determination to complete our educations. In my life, my mom was my personal example who showed the importance of lifelong learning. My mom, who at the age of 50, decided to go back to school to get her master's degree and who now over a decade later is almost done with her thesis, is finally getting ready to add another position on top of her day job as a secretary and become a sociologist. To me, my mother (who is sitting over there today, "hi mom!") showed through her example the spirit of never giving up even in the face of balancing a full-time job, raising myself, my 2 brothers and each of our respective spouses, and being an active member in her workplace, church, and local community. She showed that even if getting an education isn't easy (for example, she had to retake all her math courses and was taking Algebra the same time I was taking it...but I was in 8th grade), that pursuing self development in the long run, is one of the most fulfilling things you could ever do.

Then there is my wonderful husband, who was my direct support system and the real reason why I am here today. I jokingly call him my #1 cheerleader because he was the one who would stay up with me during my all-nighters. He was the one who would make sure I was fed by packing my breakfast every morning during the 1 semester when I attempted 8am classes. He was the one who would jump up and down upon hearing I got an A on a test and take me out for a celebratory dinner. And he was the one that

worked full-time, over-time, and took on side jobs for the past 2 and ½ years so that I could attend Marist full-time and get my degree as quickly as possible. This is even more amazing because my husband never went to college and developed a career without it. Yet seeing how important college was for me, he sacrificed himself to make sure that I achieved my goal. What's even more exciting is that after seeing my experience at Marist, my husband decided to give college a chance and this semester enrolled in his 1st course, and, may I say, did excellent in it.

The 2nd community that helped to raise me up to be a college graduate was my church community. Their active support has given me the spiritual inspiration, moral direction, and passion to become the best person I could be. Recently, my church inaugurated our 1st ever Female national pastor who was a personal inspiration to me because of her high level of education, her strong sense of family, and her strong professional life as a national pastor and CEO of an entertainment company. Her ministry over the past few years has promoted both internal and external excellence and has personally challenged me to give back and care for the world. One of the quotes that personally moved me was: "You must know you study not for your own well-being but for becoming friends of the people in a miserable condition and for teaching the unlearned, and for liberating them from their shackles and bonds." It was this kind of guidance that helped me remained motivated and gave me a sense of value behind what I was doing.

Note: The original paragraph above is below. At the request of my college, I omitted all specific references to my church:

The 2nd community that helped to raise me up to be a college graduate was my church community. I belong to the Unification Church and their active support has given me the spiritual inspiration, moral direction, and passion to become the best person I could be. Specifically, my church now has our 1st ever Female national pastor, the Rev. Dr. In Jin Moon, who was a personal inspiration to me because of her high level of education (graduating from Harvard Divinity School), her strong sense of family (raising and homeschooling her 5 children), and her strong professional life as a national pastor and CEO of an entertainment company. Her ministry over the past few years has promoted both internal and external excellence and has personally challenged me to give back and care for the world. For example, one of the quotes from the founder of my church, Rev. Moon, that personally moved me was this: "You must know you study not for your own well-being but for becoming friends of the people in a miserable condition and for teaching the unlearned, and for liberating them from their shackles and bonds." It was this kind of guidance that helped me remained motivated and gave me a sense of value behind what I was doing.

And last, but definitely not least, the 3rd community that helped to raise me up was the Marist College community. Marist College is not just an educational institution, it is a community that has allowed me to explore and develop myself with the help of expert guidance. Being a Business and Finance major, the School of Management has taught me the skills for working in business, both in the for and non-profit world. They used the classroom to train and expose me to the skill sets that I will be using in my future career. They have faculty that are concerned about your personal education and who I will be in contact with after I move on. And they provided out of the classroom learning experiences such as the Johnson & Johnson Business Case Competition and bringing in special guest speakers.

I also had the luck to be involved in Marist's Honors Program which showed me that education can be distinctive and fun. Not only did I take unique courses like Medical Botany, Food Ethics, and my personal favorite, Harry Potter and Global Society, it also gave me the chance to engage in undergraduate research and present 3 of my papers at national academic conferences. Even the Physical Education courses offered at Marist were memorable because they offered not only stress relief, but allowed me to have fun being a Modern Dancer for 1 semester and being a Sailor on the Hudson River the next.

And finally, Marist's Center for Career Services trained, finessed, and gave me the opportunities and networks to help me get the #1 job I wanted after graduation. Through their career services and employment practicum courses, I became the 1st Marist student out of 900 global applicants to be accepted into the international investment bank, Barclays Capital, intern program and be offered a full-time position upon graduation.

So thank you to the village who helped raise to me, and each of the graduating class, up. I hope that as we now move onto the next stage of our life, we can join that "village" and continue to help those around us the same way that they helped us. So congratulations to the class of 2012 and thank you!