



NEW STUDENT CONVOCATION - REMARKS
August 24, 2018

Dr. D. E. Lorraine Sterritt, President
Saint Michael's College

Good evening, everyone, and welcome!

On behalf of the entire Saint Michael's College community, I extend our warmest and most heartfelt welcome to our newest students and their families. You have chosen to join this community, and we share this journey of discovery together. You and I have come to Saint Michael's at the same time. And for that, you will always be my class.

A veritable army of people has been preparing for this joyous day when we officially welcome our newest students to campus. I would like to thank our enrollment staff who worked tirelessly to help you to make your decision to select Saint Michael's, and our student life staff who have been working all summer to get you housed, and now, this weekend, oriented to our beautiful campus. Thank you to our faculty members who advised you about your courses and majors over the summer months and who are now feverishly putting the final touches on the courses that will inspire and challenge you. And thank you to our physical plant personnel, our Sodexo food services personnel, and everyone who has made the college ready for you. It takes a village to get this place ready. And ready we are.

I, myself, could not be more excited than to stand before you today as your new president and to imagine with you the exciting times ahead. I am not so old myself that I have forgotten what it is like to be a college student, wondering about my academic path, not to mention my social path, and about my place in the world. Perhaps, like me, you are the first person in your family to go to college. Perhaps like me, you are nervous about what lies ahead, will I measure up? Will I be able to handle the volume of reading? Will I get good grades? Will I fit in?

There is no shortage of phrases that purport to capture what it is you need to do in college—find your passion, aim for the stars, challenge convention, follow your dreams—and a lesser known one—go to class!

How might we best think about how you can make the most of your time at Saint Michael's? Firstly, let me say that you are not alone in trying to figure it out. We have

many people here to help you. Please remember that when the going gets tough, the tough seek help. I want to take a moment to thank those who have helped you thus far. Students, would you please give your parents, guardians, and other family members a round of applause!

Let us reflect on what we mean by a liberal arts education. The term “liberal arts,” “artes liberales” in Latin, is defined in Wikipedia(!) as the education worthy of a free person in order to take an active part in civic life.

The term “liberal arts” today includes the humanities, the natural sciences, and the social sciences. All of the subjects taught at Saint Michael’s College draw upon the skills imparted by a liberal arts education. The sciences are an integral, and a very important, part of a liberal arts education. The arts, the sciences, and the pre-professional disciplines offered at Saint Michael’s provide excellent preparation for careers.

I’m sure you have been asked on numerous occasions what you want to be when you grow up. Some years ago, I asked my then three-year-old nephew this question. He thought for a moment and then said, “Auntie Lorraine, I don’t know what I want to be, but I know what I don’t want to be.”

“What don’t you want to be?” I asked.

“A hairdresser!” he responded.

“Why don’t you want to be a hairdresser?” I asked.

To which he responded, “Because I don’t know what STYLE is!”

If one waits to figure out what style is before figuring out what one wants to be when one grows up, one might have a very long wait.

Fortunately you have enrolled in an institution that is focused both on your education and on your future path—with style. You have the great privilege of being part of a college whose faculty and staff care very deeply about your educational experience. When you graduate you will follow in the path of generations of alumni, whose stories exemplify the ways in which a faculty member, a staff member, a coach, or a priest profoundly impacted their lives.

The Edmundites set us on this path 114 years ago when they founded this College. The charisma of this relatively small band of brothers with tremendous zeal, who just celebrated their 175th anniversary, has had a profound impact on this world. They have demonstrated that one person at a time has the power to make a difference. We all benefit from their tradition of hospitality, by virtue of which we welcome you here today. Regardless of your faith background, you will be empowered as students here by the Catholic intellectual tradition and by emphasis on service to humanity.

Parents and guardians, thank you for entrusting us with your children for this next chapter of their lives. Thank you for making Saint Michael’s College part of your family’s story. I can guarantee that we will likely not return your sons and daughters to you as

we found them. We are going to support them as we push them, and walk with them as they discover who and what they are called to be in this life.

Letting go is difficult and requires a great deal of trust. You have to trust that your children have learned the lessons you have taught them and that they live by the values you have instilled in them. You have to trust the College that we do what we say we will do. And you have to trust yourselves.

Students, we are all privileged to be here. We have an obligation to be purposeful in the pursuit of knowledge and in living lives that serve others.

In this vein, I ask but two things of you: I would like each and every one of you to endeavor *to do well and to do good*. Do the best you can in your studies. Savor every moment of your education. The happiest students are those who study first and play second! Not the other way around! And then use that education to do good in the world. The world desperately needs people educated in the liberal arts to solve the challenges that we currently face: from wars, to climate change, to economics, to poverty, to racism, to health care, the world needs both humanists and scientists.

The world needs graduates of a college whose mission is to contribute through higher education to the enhancement of the human person and to the advancement of human culture in the light of the Catholic faith.

The world needs graduates of Saint Michael's College.

If you forget everything else I say today, please remember those two things I asked of you: *do well and do good*.

But if you are to do well and to do good, I actually need to ask one more thing of you: sleep! Not right now while I'm giving a speech! Later. You must get enough sleep. Eight hours a night. Seriously.

Lastly, I will just take a moment to acknowledge once again the family members here with us today. You have made sacrifices for your sons and daughters to be here. You, too, are now part of this special community.

To one and all I extend the heartiest of welcomes as we embark together on our Saint Michael's journey.

Thank you very much.