

Lasallian Commencement Address
May, 2003
Presented by: Sarah M. Heronymus

Good afternoon member of the Board of Trustees, Brother James, honored guests, faculty, staff, fellow graduates, parents, families, and friends. At this commencement ceremony, I especially want to thank my parents. On behalf of all students to the faculty, thank you for educating us.

Saint John Baptist De La Salle, founder of the Christian Brothers, dedicated his life to serving others. His primary focus was on education. De La Salle believed that everyone deserved to be educated and he worked to keep schooling open to all. He gave himself to those who were needy and without him would not have received and education. We here at Lewis University have had the unique opportunity to receive a quality education that has been influenced by this Lasallian heritage.

Distinctive, Lasallian values permeates the spirit of Lewis University. Knowledge, fidelity, wisdom, justice, and association are all related and very important to our Lasallian education. I truly believe that association links all the values together. The process of forming a community of mutual respect, collegiality, collaboration, and service includes aspects of each value. Association brings a diverse group of people together to learn, to work, to socialize, to perform service, and to grow personally and spiritually. The desire for association fosters an attitude of unity and togetherness. Out of these attitudes people work to serve, offer affordable education, and view all people in God's likeness and strive for diversity.

My experience as a Peer Minister has been a major contribution to my Lasallian character. Everyday living in the residence hall, I was able to share my faith and build community through programming such as movie night and the year-end barbecue. I offered a helping hand with math and composition homework and listened to issues about relationships and concerns about grades, as well as sharing in the joys of good grade or getting into graduate school. These experiences allowed me to develop personally and spiritually in association with my peers.

Being a Peer Minister gave me a venue to grow and share with students, but it also challenged and forced me to become a better person and student. Being a Peer in the residence hall requires one to be a role model for the students, however, it is those students in the hall who served as a role model for us too. The activities that students become involved with and their continued interest in building the Lewis community show spirit and dedication that will carry through into the future. The daily responsibilities of Peer Ministry required me to think of others at all times and serve the community.

While Peer Ministry has been a guiding force in my life through service to the Lewis University, outreach opportunities within the Chicago area have given me the blessing of working with those in need. My experience at soup kitchens and homeless shelters have made me think about all of the gifts that I have in my life and how blessed I really am. The Big Brothers and Big Sisters program provides an opportunity to be a mentor to young students and it gave me the gift of hope. The innocence and enthusiasm of these children despite life challenges showed me that there is hope no matter what the situation. I have realized throughout my years at Lewis University that life is more than an education, an accumulation of wealth, or material items. Life is about sharing talents and gifts with one another and being the best we can for others and ourselves. Through service, I truly realized that it is in giving that we receive.

We have all seen the different aspects of the mission in action in our day to day experiences at any of Lewis' campuses. Through classes and interaction with faculty, staff, and students, we have gained knowledge and wisdom. University Ministry, theology classes, and activities with the students and faculty such as the Koinonia retreat foster the aspect of fidelity on campus and within the community, because the best way to share our faith is through actions. The university's commitment to diversity and equality has led to the promotion of justice and association. The values that we all have embraced at Lewis University will be carried with each of us into our lives outside of college.

God has given each of us the gifts and talents that we are called to share. Lewis University has given us five important values that serve as a foundation for our future. We can all live a life of service to family, friends, co-workers, and strangers. We are called to serve, to share our gifts and talents at home, in the workplace, and everywhere we go. We are called to be signs of faith.