

Student Lasallian Commencement Address

December 2017

Presented by: Alexis Luna

Good morning, members of the Board of Trustees, Dr. Livingston, honored guests, faculty, staff, fellow graduates, parents, family, and friends.

Mother Teresa once said, “I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.” As each student enters Lewis University, the Lasallian values of Knowledge, Fidelity, Wisdom, Justice, and Association are introduced into our personal, professional, and educational experiences throughout our time at Lewis. These values continued to spread like ripples in building our Lasallian character.

When I first started at Lewis, I was part of the Success Program. This program was the first of many opportunities Lewis offered to further my education and guided me to success.

Truthfully, when I started at Lewis, I believe I was not prepared for college because I did not recognize my gifts and talents. However, the dedication of faculty members like Liseth Chavez, Melissa Eichelberger, and others, provided me with the valuable experiences that helped and supported me throughout my college career and helped me recognize my gifts and talents. Their support and my relationships with them represented the Lasallian value of Association--a gift that I did not fully appreciate at the time.

As I continued to grow in my relationships with other faculty members, I realized that they were building a community of a welcoming and caring presence. I felt inspired to be part of a bigger community. As part of this community, I was able to get back in touch with my faith. I received

spiritual support so that I could regain a relationship with God, and through University Ministry, I was able to recognize my gift for helping others.

I wanted to give back to the Lewis community, so when I was offered leadership positions, I accepted them. I became a peer mentor for Success students, a peer minister in the residence halls, and accepted leadership roles in Koinonia. In each leadership role, I attempted to create a bigger and better community at Lewis.

Lewis not only offered me many opportunities but challenged me to develop my Lasallian character. Lewis offered me the chance to get out of my comfort zone and learn about others. I am especially grateful for the opportunity to have studied abroad in Australia. However, I knew I was leaving a safe and secure environment for something very much unknown. I would face many challenges as a single woman in a foreign country. But, I not only survived, I grew as a person. I became so much more confident and independent after learning how to handle all aspects of my life. I was challenged to be fearless and explore a different country on my own so that I could get the best out of my time abroad. I had to grow up, learning to cook for myself, learning how to use a different means of transportation, getting to know my surroundings, budgeting my money, although my mother did not think so, and learning to depend on myself. Being alone and having to experience change, ended up empowering me making me more open-minded and willing to adapt to change. It allowed me to see the world from a way that was not taught in a classroom. When I came back home from my semester abroad, I felt more grateful for all Lewis had offered me but also with a need to learn more about our world. My desire to search came from my time in Australia. I felt that Americans could learn something from the more

relaxed lifestyle of Australia. During my time in Australia, I also realized that hatred, bigotry, and prejudice are not only problems faced in the U.S. but are worldwide.

Before I left for Australia, I felt stuck at Lewis. Unsure about what I was expecting to get out of my college experience. Had I wasted a lot of money and racked up loans for nothing? I was searching for something. From my experiences of studying abroad, I felt a need to learn about the world and the truth that it holds.

So, what could I do? My course in Christian Social Teachings, allowed me to learn about what I was searching for. I was searching for the truth. Dr. Burke, helped us realize that it is our responsibility to help and serve others. He challenged us to understand that we have a part in making a difference in our world.

From the course and my involvement on campus, I was able to help others search for their faith, help with their spiritual journey, and help others succeed. I also believe that without the growth of my Lasallian character, one that includes respecting others as a matter of justice, I never would have made the decision to do volunteer service after graduation.

Without the support and dedication of Lewis faculty and staff members, and their spirit of association, many of our goals may not have been accomplished. The Lasallian values of Knowledge, Fidelity, Wisdom, Justice, and Association have been part of our journey at Lewis. However, I believe the value of Association may have had the greatest impact on our college experience.

Think about the challenges you faced during your years at Lewis: those long, late nights studying or researching for projects, the stress of working and being a student at the same time, caring for a sick child or parent, changing majors when you felt it was not your calling, or countless of other crises you overcame often with faculty and staff support.

Be proud of all you have accomplished, but also think of the professors and faculty members who have journeyed with you during your time at Lewis. Their care and concern have helped you get here today, ready to graduate.

It seems to me, we have much to be thankful for. So, on behalf of my fellow graduates, I want to thank the faculty and staff for all you have done for us in the spirit of association.

My fellow graduates, I invite us all to continue to develop our Lasallian character after we graduate; to continue to live the value of Association wherever our future takes us; to teach others what it means to be a Lasallian; and to remember our responsibility as Lasallians which is to be the stone dropped into the water whose ripples can help change the world.

My fellow graduates, I wish you all the best. Congratulations on this day of graduation.