

Student Lasallian Commencement Address  
May 2012  
Presented by: Jessica G. Lockett

Good afternoon, members of the Board of Trustees, Brother James, honored guests, faculty, staff, fellow graduates, parents, family and friends. Today is the day! Today is the day that we, as graduates of Lewis University, take that final step and enter a new phase of our lives! Today is the day that we celebrate all that we have accomplished! Finally, today is the day that we walk across this very stage looking toward a new future while reflecting on the transformation that has taken place within ourselves during our time here at Lewis University.

We are not the same people we were at the beginning of our time at Lewis. The education that we have received, the mission of this university, and the experiences that we have had at Lewis have had a *transformational effect* on each of us. Let's think about this transformation.

Remember when your professor sat with you after the four hour night class lecture to answer all the questions you had about that seemingly impossible assignment? Or, do you remember when you bought lunch for a commuter student on your resident meal card just to save them a few dollars?

Lastly, do you remember when you were overwhelmed and stressed about everything that was going on in your life and a professor, peer, or even a student you didn't know smiled and said "it will be alright?" It was those moments and others like them that contributed to this transformation.

We have learned so much about ourselves and about others because the mission values of knowledge, fidelity, wisdom, justice, and association have been incorporated into all aspects of our college experience. Because of this education, we each have knowledge in our respective disciplines that prepares us not only to get a job, but also to have a career and a calling. We have learned so much about the world because of our general education requirements. We have learned how and why to serve others in need and we have also learned how to be more adaptable to change and to think critically about the world around us.

I have discovered that we can't graduate from Lewis and not be familiar with the word "Lasallian." Lasallian isn't just an educational philosophy; it is a way of life. Being Lasallian demands that we take a stand against the injustices that we see; no matter how large or small. Being Lasallian is helping those in need even when you don't have much to give. Being Lasallian means sharing stories with others and embracing the similarities and differences between us. And being Lasallian means using your education to do meaningful things in the world.

My Lasallian character has been influenced by many experiences during my time here at Lewis. One experience that had a significant impact was participating in the Catalyst Social Justice retreat through University Ministry. During the retreat, we visited a men's homeless shelter to converse with them and just keep them company.

As we came in to the old, cold, gymnasium, we watched the men line up to collect their cots and prepare their beds on the floor. We watched them as they lined up to get their last meal of the day. We watched them as they made themselves comfortable, organizing their belongings around their sleeping mats. As I spoke with them and got to know them better, I found that they were confident about life and possessed a strong faith in God. They said that our presence lifted their spirits. One of the men said, "wait till you see me next year, I won't be like this."

That experience made me realize how blessed we are to have the support we have; but it also made me realize that the same Lasallian spirit that lives in our supporters (all those mentors, teachers, friends, and family) also lives in me. That same Lasallian spirit lives in all of us. Together, as graduates of Lewis University, we must reflect on how we will carry on this Lasallian tradition.

How will we do it in personal lives? Will we volunteer? Work for a non-profit organization? Will we support local charities? How will we do it in our professional lives? Counsel a family for free? Make just decisions as a law enforcement officer? Save lives as a doctor or nurse? Or teach children life lessons? It is important to reflect on the support, knowledge, values, and

wisdom that have been given to each of us and to give back to society. How will you carry on the mission and how will you use all that you have gained from Lewis because of the mission?

Today is “day one” of the rest of our lives! Today is the day we realize all that we have accomplished. Today is the day that we recognize all that we have overcome. Today is the day we start planning for our new future! Today is the day that we thank all of the people who have supported us and prepared us during college for the journey that lies ahead! We have been transformed by our mission. We are Lasallian. We are graduates of Lewis University!  
Congratulations!