Graduation Speech

Regis High School

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June 6th, 2009

Mr. Domino, Chairman of the Board, Fr. Judge, President of Regis, Dr. Tocchet, Principal of Regis, Ms. Ross, Assistant Principal of Regis, administration, faculty, parents, families, guests, and my brothers of the class of 2009

I never thought this day would come. I had always imagined it as something way far off in my mind so I must say that I am extremely delighted to be here today. There is no way for me to fully sum up, in a few minutes, our experiences at Regis. To begin, I would like to take you all back in time. Remember those first days of Regis? What a transition! It was definitely the most difficult transition of my life. It tested everything I had, emotionally, academically, socially, and physically. We were all so used to being at the top of our respective classes and having everything come easy for us. And all of a sudden we were thrust into a new school, with new people, in a city where many of us were not completely comfortable. I remember coming home after that first week of school crying to my mother. I remember telling her, "Mami, I feel like an old guy working from 9 to 5. I don't know if I can do this." But that marvelous lady whom I call my mother encouraged me. She told me that I could do it. I am certain that was the case with so many of our classmates' parents. And just look at where we are here today.

Honestly, I had doubts about having come to Regis up until my junior year. I continuously asked myself whether I had made the right choice. I wondered how different my life would have been had I gone to a typical high school. Would I have had a different circle of friends? Would I have been as New York City savy? Would I have been at the point I am in life today? But most importantly: Would there have been more women in my life? Well, who knows? What's past is past and no one will ever know. But I stand before you all here today convinced and completely confident that I made the right choice.

There are many people who we must thank for having the opportunity of being here today. I would like to begin with our fellow classmates. I **cannot** explain fully in words what all of you mean to me. With you I've shared some of the **most wonderful** and **satisfying** experiences. I can see myself as a **grandfather** one day telling my grandchildren the many things I did with all of you. I already know some of the anecdotes I'm going to tell my future rugrats. I am going to tell them about the times Joe Cherian and I would go to Central Park during freshman year to develop our skills in the **very fine art** of flirtation. We **weren't** very successful. But it wasn't my fault. I am going to tell them about the time my dear classmate and friend Cameron Kemal took me to my first ever Yankees game. I am going to tell them about the walks to midtown with Andraows Chiti, Tommy Dewick, and Bobby Nguyen. I am going to tell them about my wonderful memories of SLACS, of those freshman year dances, the games of One

Touch with Keith Calix and Brendan Smyth, the times Sebastian Polanco would try to convince me to work out with him, the moments I was awed by Phil Gillen's public speaking abilities, and of this amazing and inspirational retreat by the name of Ouest. It was an honor to be there with you guys. I am going to speak of the amazing nights I had at the mother son dances and of Phillippe and Demtrios's calls of BLOP throughout the hallways. I am going to tell them of Mario Gorz's shows and **tremendous** talents in the back of sophomore year history. I'm sorry, Mr. Anselme. I'll speak of stories of the times Anthony Errante would brag to Mike Perez about just how muscular he was. And of course I'll speak of those times during sophomore year on the soccer team when we were **unstoppable** and we would pregame to Kelly Clarkson's voice on the bus. I'll tell them of the French Exchange program and those incredible and endless nights in the streets of Paris and countryside of Champange-Ardenne with Tom Jarus, Tomasz Otlowski, and Alex Nevitt. I'll definitely tell them about Austin Moukattaf and his **unique** stories. I **won't** be able to tell them who was the best dressed member of our class because I was never able to decide between Demetrios Elias, Ben Singleton, Justin Hunte, and Ryan Escobedo. But I will be able to tell them that one of the most enjoyable times for me was the night of our prom. That was an **amazing** night that I will remember for the **rest** of my life. How could I forget Matt Colon's dazzling white tuxedo or that dance contest with Ismael Polanco, even though I was robbed. There is **no** way that P. Diddy can **ever** top a prom like that. I don't know what you all will remember me for. Maybe the boy who always greeted everyone by asking "what's popping?" or the one who always ended each sentence by saying "that's hot!" But what I do know is that if you ever need anything, you all will always find a friend in me. My fellow classmates, you have made my Regis experience truly unforgettable. I thank you all so much.

Next we should thank all our teachers and the administrators. We owe so much to you all. You have been **instrumental** in our development. I am **not** going to miss the work you gave us. Neither am I going to miss the times in which I was doing poorly in a class. I am **not** going to miss beginning a paper at 1 AM the night before it was due. Nor will I miss the times you called on me in class and I had **no** idea what was going on. But I am going to miss **how** all that work helped me develop. I am going to miss **how** teachers would take time out of their schedules to help me because they wanted me to learn the material. I'm **definitely** going to miss the times a teacher told me that they were really proud of the progress I had made.

Then, of course, there are the more specific memories. I know we are going to miss those laps around the reservoir in Central Park with Mr. Donodeo and Mr. Cullen. I'm never going to forget the first time I heard Mr. Hannon's voice, our unique conversations in Dr. Nofi's class, the way Mr. Vode helped me develop my writing, Dr. Carew's cool accent, and class with the talented Fr. Judge. I'll remember Dr. Wallin, well, for being Dr. Wallin. Just kidding. I'll remember her for the great lady and amazing educator she is. And, of course, I'll remember Mr. Acosta, a man who teaches and inspires from the heart. This Jesuit education contributed to the morals and values we hold and helped shape us into the young men we are today. I will forever hold a part of this education in my heart. I thank Regis for all the opportunities it has given us and for helping us realize what is most important in life.

Next we must give thanks to our families. I don't know where we would be without them. They are one of the most **important** reasons for us reaching this stage in our lives here today. Thank you for all the sacrifices you've made for us. Know that my classmates and I see you as some of the most **precious** treasures we have. My mother, Martha, my father, Rafael, my sister, Jennifer, and my family here and in Colombia, you are **the most beautiful** gift God could have ever given me. Don't ever change. I love you. *Los quiero mucho*.

My fellow classmates, **remember** that family is one the **most** significant things in life. No matter what, they will **always** be there. My friends, please join me in giving a warm round of applause to all the parents and guardians. To all the Regis families, thank you so much.

Finally, we **must** give thanks to God. Without him, none of this would be possible. From him we receive the peace, energy, and love for everything we do. He has given me the best friends, education, and family that I could ask for. Everytime I laugh, hug, smile, and do everything that I love to do, it is because of him. **Remember** that **wherever** you are, God is **always** looking out for you.

I would like to leave you with three principles. What I believe they lead to, is happiness.

The first principle is humility. Now I'm not saying that I want you all to walk home with your heads down and give up your ipods or designer clothing. No. But what I am asking you to do is to never forget where each one of you came from. Never forget that there are people less fortunate than us in the world. Never forget to treat these people equally. Never think they are any less than us simply because they enjoy fewer privileges than we do. Understand that we have the potential and ability to help these people. With the intellect God has given us combined with the moral formation given to us by our families and Regis, we have the power to do any good deed we want to see done in this world. My fellow classmates, remember that the actions of a person with humility are guided not by money or prestige, but by the heart.

The second principle is faith in yourself. My friends, **always** believe in yourselves. The **only** person that can put limits on what you can do during your lifetime is **you**. Always remember that attitudes are **more important** than facts. What's past is past. Remember that the way you **feel** about yourself, will dictate **how** you will succeed in life experiences. If you believe in yourself, **no one** can deny you **any** success you dream of. If you refuse to listen to the discouraging remarks of those who do not see potential in you, then success is waiting for you **right outside** that door. If you **believe** in yourself, everyone else will.

The **third** and **final** principle is faith in God. There is a line in Matthew 17:20 that has had a profound impact on my life. It says, "If you have faith...nothing shall be impossible unto you." Think about it. All you need to know is that God is **always** on your side. **Know** that if you trust him, your goals, dreams, and aspirations **will** become realities. Know that faith enriches **every** life experience. Where there is faith, there is love, and where there is love, there is happiness.

My friends, if you apply these three principles to your lives, **anything** you imagine in your minds, you will be able to hold in your hands. **Anything**. **Remember** that when you find happiness in yourself, you find success in **every** area of life. I am **convinced** that this Class of 2009 **will make history**. We will be written about in the finest newspapers and history books for generations to come for we are men of Regis and we **will** reach our full potential. And, wherever you go in life, never forget **how much** this school has given us and how we are **always** to be connected with it and with eachother.

God **truly** blessed me, when he allowed me to spend the past four years of my life with people like you.

Thank you and God bless you all.