



Commencement 2024

My sincere congratulations to our graduates, to their families and friends, Congratulations faculty and staff . . . well done! Today/tonight we ALL celebrate the graduation of our students.

Welcome to everyone to Caldwell University, your university. Students, this has been your academic home for the past several years . . . and your soon it will be your alma mater for the rest of your lives.

Your university . . . the embodiment of Mother Joseph's dream for a Catholic and Dominican college, one of the best Catholic universities in our part of the world. Founded in 1939 by Mother Joseph Dunn and generations of Sister-teachers of the Dominican order. Students came here to learn and to transform themselves into educated people and to make a difference in the world.

It is our mission as a Catholic and Dominican University to:

- promote intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic growth
- welcome all cultures and faith traditions.
- transform students' lives by preparing them through the liberal arts and professional studies

Every graduate of the Class of 2024, is expected to follow the lead of the tens of thousands of Caldwell alumni who preceded you by, not only doing well, but also by doing good, as well as remaining faithful to the enduring values you learned here: Respect, Integrity, Community and Excellence. These are not just words for Caldwell University or for you as graduates.

We also want you to know how proud we are of you. We know well what you have accomplished, what you contributed, and what you sacrificed.

Warren Buffett once said "Price is what you pay. Value is what you get." You paid the price . . . and you earned a valuable degree!

Today, I ask you to think. I know this is familiar ground as your faculty challenged you to think. I am asking you to think in three ways and you are more than capable of that.

1. FIRST . . . THINK BIG

Pope John once said "Consult not your fears but your hopes and your dreams. Think not about your frustrations, but about your unfulfilled potential. Concern yourself not with what you tried and failed in, but with what is still possible for you to do." Think about the expanse of

possibilities in front of you today! There is no limit ahead of you today, tomorrow or the day after! You are a Caldwell University graduate . . . you can do all you desire.

For example: There was a college graduate from Medford, Massachusetts. His father was a bookkeeper for a local dairy. He earned a degree then an MBA. In less than 10 years of earning his MBA he became partner and then transformed the financial services world. Just over 10 years after that, the firm was renamed Bloomberg L.P. Michael Bloomberg's net worth is upwards of \$50 billion today. . . . if Bloomberg can . . . you can! Just think of the good you could do in the world with such success

Or consider an African American woman born to a single mother who was a housemaid in Mississippi. She lived in poverty for 6 years. She attended a college on a scholarship (so she worked hard even before college). She became a millionaire at age 32 and is worth more than \$3B today. Oprah would tell you as I am today, to dream big, to do big things with your life (including raising a family, making a difference in your community and helping others)!

These are examples that success is possible when one thinks big!

2. SECOND . . . THINK DIFFERENTLY.

Henry David Thoreau once said "If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away."

- You have learned how to learn.
- You have been "instructed."
- You have paid attention
- Now it is time to make your own decisions
- Now it is time for you to lead your own professional path in life
- Now is the time to keep listening and paying attention and to use that to make a difference as you see fit.

You are successful today in your significant accomplishment of a degree. Think about your future success

- Monetarily
- Making an impact
- Non-profit, art, etc.

You measure your success . . . not others.

One of my favorite authors is James Baldwin largely because he was seen as a contrarian and he would, I believe, support the "think different" advice I am giving you. Indeed he once wrote "The world is before you and you need not take it or leave it as it was when you came in."

3. THIRD . . . THINK ABOUT OTHERS.

Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth (so said Muhammad Ali):

- Think about what is possible and do it
- Think about the help you were provided and do the same
- Think about paying it forward when you can

Memories of our lives, of our works and our deeds will continue in others (Rosa Parks)
Immortality is achievable through your good works . . . Think about becoming unforgettable!
What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others (Pericles)

- Teach others to pay it forward
- Teach your associates, family and friends to think about others
- Teach the world to make a positive impact on others

So, last . . . in my 30+ years as a faculty member and administrator in higher education and my supporting 10s of thousands of graduates at 75 commencements (and now 76) just a few bits of ending knowledge (I guess the teacher in my has to teach).

1. Invest in your long-term learning . . . read every day, your brain needs exercise and there is nothing like reading to help
2. Go out of your way to be kind to others. Do not remember the difficult people or challenging situations I have encountered. Learn to quickly move on.
3. Be happy. What else would you want to be? Focus on what maximizes your happiness. Not to the detriment of others but on what you enjoy

Congratulations again . . . well done . . . we are so proud of you! May God continue to bless you and keep you!

Closing Remarks

On behalf of the Caldwell University Community, I wish you our hearty congratulations. Your achievement today was made possible in part by the time, talent and treasure of our Board of Trustees and many other alumni and friends. Now let us take a moment to thank those who helped get you here; your faculty and the staff who challenged you and supported you,

FACULTY PLEASE STAND AND BE RECOGNIZED

Your parents and spouses, family and friends. Without them we wouldn't be here.

GRADUATES PLEASE STAND AND RECOGNIZE YOUR GUESTS

And one more expression of thanks, please – for all those staff who worked so hard for months—mostly behind the scenes—to arrange today’s wonderful ceremony for you. Graduates, please join me in thanking them all.

One last thing . . . At my first commencement as president 6 years ago I created a closing action that was intended to do something extra and special to honor graduates as you will always and forever be students I have had the honor to confer degrees upon. In this action, I want to stop your university time, marking the end of a phase in your life with your graduation. With this symbolic demonstration I hope I can impress upon you that this moment marks a new beginning in your life as well because you are no longer on University time. Of course you can come back for another degree!

It’s your turn . . . go for it! Congratulations again. May God bless you and we wish you the very best of luck. Thank you.