

## Salutatorian Address – Kaitlyn Storey

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Good evening, everybody. It's been a while. I have a feeling that, for many of you, this will be the most words you have heard or ever will hear come out of my mouth. So let's hope this goes well. Oh, and just to clarify -- don't worry -- my work is honest and I know of no cheating.

For those who don't know, I only attended Seton for the last 2 years of high school, so pardon my lack of sweet sentiments and fond memories in this speech. I'll have to leave that to the more qualified speakers.

Sadly, this year did not go as many had hoped. Pretty much all the fun stuff planned for senior year at Seton didn't happen and I'm pretty sure that's why most seniors even bother finishing senior year. Not to mention the huge personal impact this virus has had on each of our lives.

For starters, I'm sure most of us were picking up new hobbies instead of finishing Mrs. Mirus's papers. Quarantine became a time to experiment with your hair, your cooking, get in shape, and get closer with your families. Which for some of us helped us realize we're not barbers, terrible cooks, probably set a world record for hours of TV watched in one week, and some days it feels like you could never get far enough away from your family.

But we have no doubt become creative with our time and realize all we can do with it and that maybe we really do have time to write letters and go for walks -- who knew?

But more importantly, this pandemic has shown us how heroic and dedicated our communities and neighbors have been in times of need, how tirelessly and selflessly our healthcare workers, food drive organizers, and first responders have worked to save lives and to keep our communities functioning. How people everywhere offer their thanks, help, and positivity is inspiring -- all signs of true strength we should acknowledge, and have certainly learned from. This life-altering turn of events brought out some of the best of humanity.

It has reminded us that, all changes, big and small, are a part of life. And after spending only a couple years and a COVID infested end to senior year with this class, anyone could see that you guys can take on anything that comes your way.

In a time of peril in the Marvel universe, the wise Star Lord once said, "I look around at us and you know what I see? Losers... I mean like, folks who have lost stuff. And you think life takes more than it gives, but not today. Today it's giving us something. It is giving us a chance." (Guardians of the Galaxy, 2014)

Life right now can seem harsh and, at the very least, unpredictable. But when it's most harsh and most intimidating, it acts as our best chance -- our best chance to grow stronger and overcome obstacles of any kind. We can always turn things around for the better, even when we're at our lowest points (which I've heard is particularly reassuring news for those headed for college life)

Another "graduation-speech-life-lesson" I would like to include is this. Something I've noticed throughout the quarantine is the repeated use of the word "uncertain". "Please be understanding with us during these times of uncertainty" "Thank you for your patience during these uncertain times"

And I feel like that word gets a bad rap. Really, just because something is uncertain, doesn't make it something to be afraid of.

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Because as Henry Spencer from the TV show Psych once said, “Life is not made up of a single moment. It’s made up of a gazillion moments. What defines us is the choice we make in the next moment. And the one after that. These moments, Shawn, are happening. (\*while snapping spastically\*) They’re all around us all the time.” (“Psych” season 3, ep. 2, 26:26-26:39)

At this point in our lives, graduates, uncertainty about the future is one of the scariest things -- uncertainty about our jobs, relationships, debt, our friends and families, and, presently, the health and well-being of our nation and loved ones. But one thing is certain, that we have a “gazillion moments” in our lives to learn from our mistakes, to conquer fears, to love better. We are in control of what we do every moment, and it’s not what happens to us that defines us, but rather what we do in each and every one of those moments.

One more quote -- and if you haven’t appreciated or understood the previous references, I’ll give it one more shot:

“All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us” -- Gandalf the Gray, Fellowship of the Ring (movie)

No matter how high school went for you, no matter how uncertain the future may seem right now, and now matter how scary things seem, we always have now.

Things don’t always go the way we plan, and high school sure acts as testament to that. But, from what I’ve seen, no matter what comes our way, this class can do it all. For the record I can’t express how grateful I am to have pedalled alongside you guys for the last 2 years. You all are inspiring, resilient, unbelievably talented, slightly crazy, but are no doubt destined for greatness. So remember to take life one moment at a time, and never be afraid to be great because all we have is now.