

Moira Haggerty's Salutatorian Speech – Seton Graduation June 5, 2023

Thank you to everyone who is here to celebrate the graduation of the class of 2023! Thank you to the teachers and staff of Seton who have guided us on our journey to graduation, and have showered on us so many blessings and lessons on life. Thank you to Mrs. Carroll, who has made sure that all of the seniors have been educated thoroughly in the faith and can climb the rungs of the ladder that begins with truth, continues onto love, and ends in evangelization. Thank you also to Mr. Pennefather for bestowing many words of wisdom throughout our time at Seton. Thank you to our parents for sending us to Seton and giving us the opportunity to make great memories and friendships. Thank you to Fr. Sean and Fr. Ed for celebrating Mass. Finally, thank you to all my classmates for a wonderful six years; it was fun getting to know you all, and I will miss you as we part ways and head out into the world. As the wonderful philosopher Winnie the Pooh said, “How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard.”

When I was thinking about what to write about for this speech, I had absolutely no idea. Then my mom said write about what you know.

I know flowers.

I have been gardening for as long as I can remember. One of the most vivid memories that I have with my garden is when we planted sunflowers. They were taller than eight-year-old me with blooms bigger than my face. I remember running through the rows and playing games.

Now I have a garden that extends beyond a couple rows of sunflowers. I have a beautiful meadow of flowers in my front yard, and I love walking through the waist-high blooms appreciating the beauty that God has allowed me to witness just by planting some seeds.

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That beauty is magnified by the fact that no flower is quite like another one. And maybe just like every other flower gardener, I want to plant each and every single one. The only problem is my meager budget. So in order to grow a garden I can afford, I have to begin with the basics. Seeds. Tubers. The bare root.

If anyone has seen the bare root of a peony plant it is basically just a knobby stick with a couple shoots of green to let you know that the plant is, in fact, alive. After the first year, it's doubtful if you'll get any blooms from the plant. But as time goes on, that plant, that was once just a knobby stick, grows, and it starts producing flowers. And every year it produces more and more flowers, and before long, you have a beautiful peony plant producing the most awesome fragrant blossoms.

And just like the peony, every seed I plant in my garden starts out small, but grows and grows and now our yard is filled with God's beauty.

There are many, many different types of plants in a garden and the unique aspects of each makes the whole beautiful. While walking in my small meadow, I looked at the yarrow that is growing. There are little florets, tiny flowers, that make up the bigger flower. Each one is perfectly shaped and adds to the beauty of the bloom. Then I realized that separate things, when combined together can make something impactful. Flowers planted together in the same space make a garden. People make up a class.

Six years ago, we were just bare roots, awkward seivies navigating the halls of Seton for the first time. And just like the garden reflecting God's beauty, we have grown as people and as a class.

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We are all unique the same way every plant is different from another. Some plants require a lengthy time to grow and bloom, but when they do, they shine, just like Tim shone this year with Seton swimming and the musical. Some flowers require very little time to grow so they can be directly seeded into the garden and blossom quickly, just like Maggie becoming involved in Seton theater the moment she stepped foot on our campus. Some varieties tower over the other plants in the garden the way the boys did after the summer before junior year;

I know I'm short, but when I stand next to Patrick or JP, I just feel like a midget.

Some plants can be leveled by the elements and bounce right back looking just as good as they did before, almost the same way Joe made an incredible recovery from breaking his femur and then making personal records in swimming and playing lacrosse.

In A Story of a Soul, St. Therese “understood how all the flowers [God] created are beautiful, how the splendor of the rose and the whiteness of the lily do not take away the perfume of the little violet or the delightful simplicity of the daisy. [She] understood that if all the flowers wanted to be roses, nature would lose her springtime beauty, and the fields would no longer be decked out with little wild flowers.”

Individuals make up the Class of 2023. And even though we are individuals with our own personalities, we are not the Separate Persons Graduating in 2023, we are the Class of 2023. We are part of something bigger than ourselves.

All our eclectic personalities, talents, and opinions have made our class what it is. Our class would not be the same if it did not include just one of the fifty-three people that are graduating here today.

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We have big personalities like our presidents: Gus and Cat. We have sports stars like Mary Pennefather, Norah and Kateri. Our class includes people that always have a smile on their face like Amelie and Mary Collins. We also have extraordinarily smart people in our class like Chris, Rudy and Olivia. There are also the quiet personalities when once you get to know them, you learn that they're really funny like Maddie, Angie and Victoria. We have several people who have angelic voices like Emma and Ellie Moore. We have people that love tinkering with mechanical things like Nico Verrochio, Zach or JJ. Our class also includes several individuals who become comedians when they give a speech and you can't stop laughing because of how funny it is as I experienced in Speech class with Kevin and Matt.

We are the Class of 2023, and we have grown together. We have learned numerous lessons throughout our Seton career, such as how to write a college length paper, how to dissect a frog or a pig, and how to graph the slope of a line.

We have been vigorously educated in the Catholic faith. We learned the definition of a sacrament from the very beginning of seventh grade. We learned the different parallels between the New Testament and the Old Testament. We learned different chants in Religion and have memorized all twelve apostles. We have learned from Fr. Koehr that you need at least 15 minutes of mental prayer.

But beyond all this, we learned how to apply our knowledge. Mrs. Carroll's religion tests have ensured that we know how to think, and can face any situation involving morals, metaphysics, or bioethics. We learned that all humans are unique, rational individuals regardless of their abilities.

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St. Therese said, “Just as the sun shines simultaneously on the tall cedars and on each little flower as though it were alone on the earth, so Our Lord is occupied particularly with each soul as though there were no others like it.” I hope you have learned that even if you were the only person alive on the planet, Christ still would have become human and died for you. And because of that, your actions should be an imitation of the God who lived and died for you. Let your presence be a sign to others that there is a God, and that He is working through your example and actions.

Our potential to become a towering oak, or a gorgeous zinnia, just like a seed, has been planted there by God from the very beginning. When we came to Seton that seed had already been planted. We were little seedlings that were transplanted into Seton's ground where we were watered, the soil was amended and we were given an environment in which to flourish and thrive. Now that we are seniors the seed given to us has become a mature plant with unique characteristics.

Class of 2023 you're going to walk out the doors as a graduate of Seton School. Always remember that you are an extraordinary individual that has God-given talents and capabilities. Remember that an individual can be part of something bigger than themselves. The biggest community you can be part of is the Church family. Embrace that family that connects every one of us and make it part of you. You have been given the gift of an education like no other. You are being transplanted from Seton soil, and it is your decision now where you are going to be planted. So wherever you take root, make sure that Christ is nourishment so that you can continue to produce a beautiful harvest of thirty, sixty and a hundredfold.