

Mr. Marshall, Mr. Rodgers, Board of Directors, faculty and staff of CDA, fellow students, family, and invited guests, on behalf of the class of 2009 of Coram Deo Academy: Welcome to our commencement ceremony. It is a true pleasure to have you join with us this evening to relish the past, celebrate our present, and anticipate what the future holds.

Albert Einstein once said “Intellectual growth should commence at birth and cease only at death.” We, the graduating class of 2009, have done a lot of growing intellectually, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Although it is a trend we purpose to continue, we would like to take some time now to reflect on our growth, our greenhouse, and our dedicated caretakers/keepers/growers/trainers/supervisors/sustainers/nurturers.

For most members of our class the Coram Deo experience began in logic school, but for Lauren Westbrook, Rebecca Musgrove, and me, this adventure started at Flower Mound Classical Christian School in fifth grade. It was in Mr. Ea’s classroom where potato experiments were conducted in a closet and four square was the recess pastime. The following year we were introduced to new comrades and recreational activities like football with Cicero’s number one fan, Dr. Frederick. But it was not all fun and games; academics escalated as well. Greek mythology mysteries with Mrs. Powell made our heads spin. Was it Procne..... orrr.... Philomela that fed their second... cousin’s son to her... husband?

Nevermind. It was also during these years that we became familiar with the CDA staple: debate. On those anticipated debate days Mr. Dwyer's room could have been mistaken for a warzone as accusations and rebuttals flew wildly between warring history teams and alert minds.

But the first day of high school heralded the true commencement of growth. Mrs. Ligon's Biology class stretched us all further than we desired. Never before had we studied so many biomes, bodies, binary systems, bugs, bacteria, and baking. Yes, baking. *lean in* The key ingredient to fluffy pancakes is a 15 minute resting period. Of course there is a scientific reason for this. 15 minutes gives the batter ingredients time to create CO₂ which adds volume and a greater surface area.

The intellectual transplanting and pruning continued especially under Ms. Loe, who led us all through Latin and Rhetoric. Learning the speaking methods of Aristotle, Quintilian, and Plato as well as their language was a challenging feat. But with coffee in hand, Ms. Loe helped us perfect our presentation and master the art of an ethnography and empirical paper.

There was Mrs. Stokes' Chemistry Lab where the safety habits of the Lab were engrained in our minds. Always watch that Bunsen burner, put on those goggles, and make sure to take your measurements in Celsius and grams.

We experienced some growing pains in Medieval Literature. Beowulf, Sir Gawain, Don Quixote, and Roland themselves could not be prouder of the massive amounts of notes we took ...or the pictures Mr. Swindle drew.

However this note-taking skill proved quite expedient when we encountered Dr. Heitschmidt's European History class where we learned to weather harsh growing environments. "Wait! Could you please go back to that slide....not enough specific evidence?list all the social, political, and economic effects?!" So goes the anthem of that class.

And this year through America's History and Literature we've had a truly fascinating exploration yet not without more notes and more tests pinnacled by our senior author presentations. Whispered about like a rumored ancient torture, the senior author presentation may be the best assignment in all of high school. (Each senior befriends a specific American author like Edith Wharton, William Sydney Porter, Earnest Hemmingway, or Willa Cather and creatively introduces him/her to the rest if the class.)

Mr. Lemley has been an indispensable figure in our greenhouse, sharing many insights in the classroom, on the basketball court, and out into the car lines. He never failed to offer a high-five in the hallway or stop to ask "just how are you doing?"

We will never forget Mr. Rector's o-so-corny methods of generating our laughter and Mr. Schaefer's laugh itself. Both of which were necessary to get us through Physics. Ahhh, Physics, where we learned the fundamentals of the world around us, that AC doesn't always stand for air conditioning, and that the heavens truly do proclaim the glory of God.

All the staff members at CDA invested countless hours in tending, guarding, and pruning their little seedlings. From Mrs. Perry in the office putting together our transcripts and answering every question imaginable to Coach Brake in the gym overseeing and diligently coordinating events. Their vigilance in the greenhouse eased any uncertainties and created an ideal atmosphere.

Although academics were an ever present part of our growth, there were many other things that helped to develop us. Extracurricular avenues have produced unique flowering and vegetation within each individual. Band, Drama, Art, Athletics, student government, Speech and Debate. Here we found the most passionate kids on campus and formed friendships that will continue. Not only did we enjoy these activities, we excelled. Our class has brought in unprecedented amounts of recognition and awards through TAPPS, TPSMEA, and the NFL...National Forensics League, that is.

Our class has not only included participants, but pioneers. We were the first to experience online textbooks.... in physics and calculus. We were the first to

introduce unique styles of art to the hallways. We were the first to lead the House System to new heights and unparalleled volumes of activity. We were the first to initiate a girl's Bible study every Friday morning. We have helped pave the way for those who are to follow.

While our greenhouse has been structured, it has produced a diverse and individualistic graduating class. We could be strong-willed too. It took us hours to decide on dance venues, fundraising ideas, and even party agendas. We were so stubborn in fact, that until this very year we still opted to sit boys on one side of and girls on the other side of the classroom.

However I believe that this passionate determination will serve us well as we enter the future. In the next four years we will experience things and influence people we never before imagined. Of course we aspire to greatness, but I was inspired by what Saint Augustine had to say about it: "Do you wish to be great? Then begin by being. Do you desire to construct a vast and lofty fabric? Think first about the foundations of humility. The higher your structure is to be, the deeper must be its foundation. Do you wish to rise? Begin by descending. Find out how much God has given you and from it take what you need; the remainder is needed by others."

We, the graduating class of 2009, have been truly blessed to spend the past years of our development together. The greenhouse doors are now open and our

paths will diverge. But in actuality nothing is disappearing; we are merely being transplanted. For our growth will always continue, the gardeners are never too far away, and we declare what the Psalmist David said: “I am like an olive tree flourishing in the greenhouse of God; I trust in His unfailing love forever and ever.”

Above all we are grateful. Thank you, headmaster, board of directors, teachers, faculty, parents, siblings, mentors, and friends. You are part of who we are and we will never forget. Thank you!