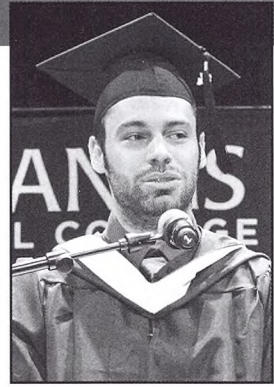


Highlights From The Valedictorian's Address Robert de Gannes



“Wha's the Scene?”

Some of you may know me as Robert, and some of you may know me as Mez, and some of you may not know me at all.

I'd like to say that I am still in shock that this day has come. Three years ago when I left my little twin island republic of Trinidad and Tobago to come to the United States, I went from a tropical paradise, where it's never less than 80 degrees and there isn't a place you can be and not see some part of nature, to the steel and concrete of New York City.

Some of you may even know that when I got the call that I was valedictorian for our winter commencement, I was pretty much in shock. I definitely believed that there was some mistake, somewhere. However, the more I thought about this special honor, the more I realized that I can chalk up much of my life's success to a few principles and lessons that I have learned along the way during my short life.

One such memory and life lesson comes from my parents who have told me time and time again that “Success is doing what you're supposed to do when you're supposed to do it.” Thus, as we all begin to go out into the world, looking for own success, please recall the above words and how much relies on our own commitment, consistency, and follow through.

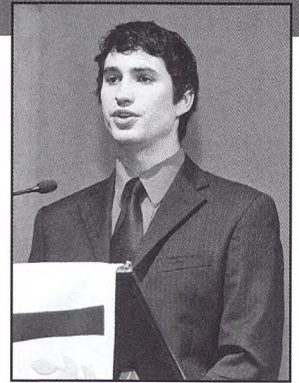
Secondly, my nickname Mez, short for Mezeker is an Ethiopian name, whose meaning means “to remember.” Mezeker is also the name of a poem, whose story revolves around demonstrating that no matter what color, creed or race you are, or how bad your situation is, someone else, somewhere else, may always have it worse. This simple revelation has helped me through many of tough times and even our final exams each year.

I have no doubt that all of us are going to have to work very hard to achieve the things that we want in our lives. In my estimation, it is very important to make time for fun during these life's journeys. There is a saying in Latin that goes “Ars Longa, Vita Brevis”. These words translate to “The art is long, but life is short.” Additionally, in this context, art means work. Thus, while I have no doubt in my mind that every one of us will have to continue working hard towards life's goals and aspirations, working with no fun at all will eventually kill us.

Finally, there is just one thought that I would like to leave you all with as we begin to embark on professional journeys that are accompanied with rather tumultuous times, above all else in life, always remember, “Work Never Dies, Humans Do.”

Baccalaureate Mass Farewell

Marcus Budig - SGA President



I bargained with life for a penny, and life would pay no more. However, I begged at evening when I counted my scanty store, for Life is a just an employer. He gives you what you ask, but once you have set the wages, you must bear the task. I worked for a menial hire. Only to learn, dismayed, that any wage I had asked of Life, Life would have willingly Paid."

-Jesse Rittenhouse (Think and Grow Rich, 1960)

At the end of our college experience we are now faced with a teetering moment, where our lives can go in almost any direction it so chooses. Our time as a student at SFC is over, done, and we are on to the next stage of this pastime we call life.

It has been a memorable but distinct experience to each one of us. For this, a special thanks is extended to the Dugan administration, Chancellor Frank Macchiarola, the faculty, who were there to teach us the knowledge they willingly gave, and our support groups, which include family and friends. Together we make up the Saint Francis Community. To this community we say "thank you... now give us our diplomas."

We also now sit at the starting line of life after college. Each starting line is unique to each and every one of us. And even more unique will be our finishing lines. We must not be paralyzed in our paths by our own fears. Fears that include poverty, criticism, ill health, loss of love, old age, and death. We shall overcome all of these obstacles with our thoughts; not the thoughts of apathy and lack of caring, but the thoughts of faith in the person who you want to become in life. For some, the person you want to become is clear, for others, not so much. And for all graduates, we must be self-starters. The path our community helped lead us to may be uncertain, but it has prepared and guided us in our approach to life. Together, we have learned the importance of positive self-thoughts, attitudes, and Franciscan Values.

When our paths become more apparent, we must set goals, and fill our hearts with desire. The desire I am talking about is one like Rudy Ruettiger; the kid with a dream to play Notre Dame football and dramatically achieved his goal against all odds. This desire requires persistence and an alignment for habits and actions that promote the successes we desire. Decisiveness in life must be felt, like our topic sentence in the many papers we have written over our college careers.

From here, our graduation, we are setting out for life. I urge you all to become your very best. Accumulate wisdom, always listen, remember to treat others the way you want to be treated, and remember to balance quality, quantity, and spirit in everything that you do.

Anybody can wish for success, and most people do, but only a few know that a definite plan, plus a burning desire for success, are the only dependable means of accumulating success. Best of luck to the class of 2011, hope to see you soon.