

# Jessica Verdeterame



EXCERPTS FROM VALEDICTORIAN SPEECH OF THE SPRING 2008 COMMENCEMENT:

EACH ONE OF US HAS A DIFFERENT STORY OF HOW WE CAME TO ST. FRANCIS, AND WE ALL HAVE EXPERIENCES THAT HAVE PROFOUNDLY IMPACTED OUR LIVES. I BELIEVE THERE IS A PLAN FOR EACH OF US. THINGS HAPPEN FOR A REASON. EVEN THOUGH IT MAY NOT SEEM LIKE THE RIGHT PATH AT THE TIME, ONE DAY WE LOOK BACK AND WE REALIZE THAT THINGS HAPPENED EXACTLY AS THEY SHOULD HAVE.

FOR EXAMPLE, I NEVER IMAGINED I WOULD GRADUATE FROM A COLLEGE LIKE ST. FRANCIS! I GRADUATED FROM HIGH SCHOOL IN 1999 ...IN OHIO. WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT I WOULD END UP A ST. FRANCIS GRADUATE IN BROOKLYN IN 2008? BUT MY ROAD FROM THERE TO HERE WASN'T EASY. MY LIFE HAS BEEN RICH WITH EXPERIENCES, YET UNPREDICTABLE AND FULL OF SURPRISES. I HAD ALWAYS WANTED TO GO TO COLLEGE, AND WITH THE HELP OF SOME KEY PEOPLE, LIKE MY HUSBAND JOHN, I WAS ABLE TO PUT MY LIFE ON TRACK, HE HAS CHANGED MY LIFE IN WAYS I COULD NEVER HAVE IMAGINED.

I MET ANOTHER INFLUENTIAL MAN IN NEW YORK. HE IS A FRANCISCAN BROTHER WHO GOES BY THE NAME OF BROTHER GEORGE. MY FIRST EXPERIENCE OF ST. FRANCIS WAS IN HIS OFFICE IN THE SUMMER OF 2004. AT THE TIME, I WAS WORKING AS A RESERVATIONISTS' FOR A FAMOUS CHEF, UNSATISFIED, AND I HEARD THAT EMPLOYEES AT ST. FRANCIS ARE ALLOWED TO TAKE SIX CREDITS PER SEMESTER AS PART OF THEIR BENEFITS PACKAGE. IT SOUNDED LIKE A PRETTY SWEET DEAL! I HAD AN APPOINTMENT WITH BROTHER GEORGE, WHO INFORMED ME THAT AT THE RATE OF SIX CREDITS PER SEMESTER, IT WOULD TAKE ME ABOUT TEN YEARS TO GRADUATE. I WALKED INTO HIS OFFICE THINKING I WAS ON A JOB INTERVIEW, AND I WALKED OUT A FULL TIME STUDENT..

WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE GIFT OF EDUCATION. WE HAVE BEEN TAUGHT TO NEVER STOP QUESTIONING, ENCOURAGED TO MAKE OUR OWN TRAIL INSTEAD OF ACCEPTING BARRIERS, AND TO INCORPORATE THE FRANCISCAN SPIRIT INTO OUR EVERYDAY LIVES. WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED DIDN'T ONLY TAKE PLACE IN THE CLASSROOM, BUT WITHIN THE ENTIRE COLLEGE COMMUNITY. OUR LIVES HAVE BEEN ENRICHED BY ONE ANOTHER. ALL OF US WILL AGREE THAT AS WE WALK THROUGH THE ONE AND ONLY ENTRANCE TO ST. FRANCIS, WE ARE SURROUNDED BY STUDENTS AND FACULTY FROM AROUND THE WORLD. A FEW WEEKS AGO, I WAS AT O'KEEFE'S WITH A GROUP OF FRIENDS TO CELEBRATE THE COMPLETION OF OUR THESIS. SITTING AT THE TABLE WERE PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS: PUERTO RICAN, SOUTH AMERICAN, IRISH, ITALIAN, ARMENIAN, POLISH... JUST TO NAME A FEW. THIS IS THE MAGIC THAT FLOODS OUR HALLS EVERY DAY. OUR SCHOOL IS LIKE A MINI UNITED NATIONS... WE CELEBRATE OUR DIFFERENCES AND WE ALL SUPPORT ONE ANOTHER AND TREAT EACH OTHER WITH RESPECT. THAT IS THE SPIRIT, THE ESSENCE OF ST. FRANCIS COLLEGE.

AND SO GRADUATES, YOU ALL HAVE INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE MADE AN IMPACT AND LOVING PEOPLE TO STAND BEHIND YOU ON YOUR JOURNEY. LET US NOT FORGET WHAT WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED TOGETHER, AND REMEMBER TO APPROACH THE REST OF YOUR LIFE WITH THE SAME DEDICATION AND ENTHUSIASM. THIS DAY IS BOTH AN ENDING AND A BEGINNING. AS WE LEAVE THE COMFORT OF OUR ST. FRANCIS FAMILY, WE SHOULD NOT BE AFRAID. TAKE WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED HERE AND CARRY IT WITH YOU. LIFE WON'T ALWAYS BE EASY, BUT THE CHALLENGES MAKE US STRONGER AND WISER.

CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2008 AND I WISH YOU ALL THE BEST OF LUCK.



## GOODBYE SFC

PULLING ALL NIGHTERS  
PAPERS GALORE

JUST WHEN YOU THINK YOU'RE DONE READING  
PROFESSORS ASSIGN YOU MORE

ALL NIGHT PLAY REHEARSALS  
SCHOOLS DANCES AND FIELD TRIPS  
GOING TO THE BAR AFTER A HUGE FINAL  
JUST TO HAVE A FEW SIPS

I'VE MADE SOME GREAT FRIENDS  
AND MEMORIES I'LL NEVER FORGET  
I'VE EVEN FALLEN IN LOVE  
TO ONE OF THE MOST LOVING GUYS I'VE EVER MET

FORMED GREAT RELATIONSHIPS WITH PROFESSORS  
I'VE LEARNED TO COME OUT OF MY SHELL  
LEARNED LESSONS ABOUT LIFE  
SOME I CAN'T WAIT TO TELL

ST. FRANCIS WAS MORE THAN A COLLEGE  
FOR A LONG TIME IT WAS A PLACE I CALLED HOME  
WHETHER IT WAS SITTING IN THE LOUNGE WITH FRIENDS  
OR GOING AROUND THE NEIGHBORHOOD JUST TO ROAM

FRIENDS AND I WOULD PLAY CARDS IN THE CAFETERIA  
UNTIL THE SECURITY GUARDS WOULD KICK US OUT  
BUT WE KNEW IF WE GAVE THEM SOME FOOD  
THEY'D LET US PLAY A LITTLE LONGER, WITHOUT A DOUBT

VALENTINE'S DAY AUCTIONS  
OUR VERY FIRST MURDER MYSTERY NIGHT  
BEING A PART OF RELAY FOR LIFE  
ALL ON OUR CAMPUS OF BROOKLYN HEIGHTS

MY TIME HERE WAS NOT JUST ABOUT ACADEMICS  
IT WAS A TIME THAT LET ME GROW  
I LEARNED WHO I TRULY WAS  
I FOUND OUT THINGS ABOUT MYSELF THAT I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW

I LEARNED THAT I WAS INTELLIGENT  
I LEARNED THAT I WAS STRONG  
I LEARNED THAT I COULD DO ANYTHING I PUT MY MIND TO  
EVEN IF I TOOK TOO LONG

# *Luana Puputa*



I'VE BEEN THE VAN WILDER OF ST. FRANCIS  
I'VE BEEN HERE FOR 6 YEARS  
I HAD LEFT AND COME BACK  
DESPITE OF ALL MY FEARS

BECAUSE IF THERE IS ANYTHING THAT I'VE BEEN  
TAUGHT  
IT WAS THAT I WAS MADE TO DO GREAT THINGS  
BESIDES GOING OUT AND PARTYING  
OR GOING TO ANNIE'S FOR HAPPY HOUR OR EVEN  
JUST TO SING

THESE WERE SOME OF THE BEST YEARS OF MY LIFE  
A TIME I DON'T REGRET  
A TIME OF GREAT LEARNING AND FUN  
WITH PEOPLE I'LL NEVER FORGET

SO THIS IS MY GOODBYE LETTER  
TO A SCHOOL THAT HAS BEEN SO GREAT  
CONGRATULATIONS GUYS! WE DID IT!  
CLASS OF 2008!!

