

2018 Mount Michael Benedictine Valedictorian Speech

Matthew Thiele

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to welcome all of you to the graduation of Mount Michael's class of 2018. Before I begin, I want to thank everyone here, especially the parents, faculty, and monastic community. Without your dedication, we would not be who we are today.

When I chose to come to Mount Michael, it was first and foremost for the strong academics and unique boarding experience. What teenage boy doesn't want independence, right? And Mount Michael has certainly delivered on those points. But last Friday, as I lounged around at our senior gathering and thought over what had impacted me the most, I realized that it was my classmates. They are kind, talented, and hardworking. From the Cross-Country bus rides to the late-night dorm discussions, I know that the experiences I have had with these people will remain with me for the rest of my life. Almost nowhere else can you find such a brotherhood of accomplished young men.

And accomplished they are. As many of you already know, this class has had many achievements over the years. We have been leaders, both academically and athletically. Our journalism team has several statewide recognitions, and one of our robotics teams has competed on the international level. We directed attention back towards Mount Michael's roots, the monastic community, through our newspaper articles and through the organization of gatherings at the monastery. We have participated in various service projects, including the missionary trips over spring break and the pro-life trip to Washington D.C. We brought back the pep rally. We, as a class, have achieved an average ACT score of 28.6, a school record, and in a few short months,

we will be attending colleges across the country. I could go on. I do not list all these distinctions simply to boast. At least, that isn't my main intention. I bring them up to make a point, that all of you are capable of changing the world.

As of today, all of you are moving onwards to become freshmen in college. It may be unnerving to think about leaving Mount Michael, and the lives we have built for ourselves here. But our education and experiences from our time at Mount Michael shall serve as the foundation for the lives we have ahead of us. It is time to look ahead, to our futures and our dreams. As American writer John Shedd once wrote, "a ship in harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are built for."

Congratulations, my fellow graduates, and good luck.

Thank you.