

I would like to thank St. Andrews for giving all of us the opportunity to expand our knowledge in the fields that we love. For me, St. Andrews has been not just a school which I attended but a way to make a dream come true. As I'm sure many of you feel the same way. Everyone from students to the faculty and staff has been wonderful, and I can not imagine a better place to go to school. My dream was to become a teacher and St. Andrews has made that possible. I found out through my aunt that my family has a long history with St. Andrews. If you include the original women's college of Flora McDonald and the men's Presbyterian Junior college that later came together to become St. Andrews Presbyterian College, then I had one great great uncle who was President of the Presbyterian Junior College, 2 great aunts, 9 cousins, my grandparents on my father's side, my Aunt Rebecca and my older brother Jaime who all graduated from St. Andrews. Today it is an honor to join with both them and you as graduates of St. Andrews.

In thinking of what to say today, I wanted to share an inspiring quote for our graduating class. I was going to use a quote from a famous person in history with a theme of reaching for the stars or never give up. However, one particular comment kept coming back to my mind. This person may not be famous to the world, but she is in the educational department of this college. In the exit interview with Dr. Jones, she asked about my greatest weakness. After a moment of reflection, I replied that some people had said I was too nice to be a teacher and those comments had really concerned me. What Dr. Jones said next was an inspiring or *ah ha* moment. To paraphrase, she told me not to worry that it is always best lean on the side of kindness. With that she smiled and the self doubt melted away. I knew I would find a way to be both kind and a good teacher. Even though I have just started my career, that quote has helped working with difficult students and parents. Then when a fellow teacher gave a kind word of encouragement I see how it brightens my own day. I find a kind word can go a long way and work wonders. Dr. Jones' wise advice is not only true for teachers, but for everyone. No, matter what field of work you choose to go into or where you choose to live I feel the world would be a better place for everyone if we would always remember to lean on the side of kindness. Thank you and congratulations.