

Chicago Jesuit Academy
Inaugural Commencement Ceremony
29 May 2009

at

The McLaughlin Center for the Performing Arts
St. Ignatius College Prep
1076 W. Roosevelt Road
Chicago, IL 60608

Event Schedule

- 5:30 PM Guests begin arriving
- Chicago Jesuit Academy student ambassadors welcome/seat guests
 - Horn quintet plays
 - Graduates sign and seal letters to teachers with Mr. Beckley
 - Graduates take photo on SICP front steps with Mr. Diehl
 - Graduates view graduation video
 - Graduates write note(s) to seventh graders
 - Looped slide show of the Class of 2009 plays as guests are seated
 - Class of 2009 forms up in McLaughlin Room with faculty, staff and honored guests
- 6:00 PM Processional
- Horn quintet plays processional
 - Chicago Jesuit Academy faculty & staff enter through left door
 - CJA faculty, staff and honored guests cross in front of stage, walk steps at stage left and are seated stage left in three rows of eight
 - Class of 2009 enter through same door
 - Class of 2009 walk steps at stage right and seated stage right
- 6:10 PM Welcome and Opening Prayer
- Welcome: MGL
 - Opening Prayer: R. P. Edward Schmidt, S.J.
- 6:20 PM Student Speeches: “Gratitude is the Hallmark of a Gentleman”
- Introduction to Student Speeches: MGL
 - In Gratitude: Teachers
 - Given by: Tremaine Funches and Jaquan Grier
 - All teachers asked to stand
 - Letters distributed by: Hart, Lacy, McCoy, Castleberry
 - In Gratitude: Benefactors
 - Given by: Emiliano Vargas
 - All Class of 2009 scholarship benefactors asked to stand
 - Matt and Christine Botica accept Class of 2009 Scholarship Benefactor plaque on behalf of benefactors
 - In Gratitude: Parents & Classmates
 - Given by: Deon Taylor
 - All parents asked to stand
 - Letters distributed privately after ceremony

- 6:45 PM Commencement Speaker
- Introduction: MGL
 - Commencement Speech: Mr. Brian Lewis
- 7:00 PM Awards and Commencement
- Introduction to Grad at Grad Awards: MGL
 - *Open to Growth* presented by Mr. Dave Diehl
 - *Open to Growth* received by TBA
 - *Loving* presented by Mr. Quincy Jones
 - *Loving* received by TBA
 - *Religious* presented by Mr. Thomas Beckley
 - *Religious* received by TBA
 - *Committed to doing justice* presented by Mr. Chris Dwyer
 - *Committed to doing justice* received by TBA
 - *Intellectually Competent* presented by Ms. Caela Carter
 - *Intellectually Competent* received by TBA

 - Conferring of Diplomas:
 - Diehl, Hogel & Jones read names & high schools
 - MGL, KZ & CSC present books & diplomas

 - Closing prayer

 - Presentation of the Class of 2009
- 7:30 PM Recessional
- Horn quintet plays
 - Class of 2009 exits as they entered
 - CJA faculty, staff and honored guests exit as they entered
- 7:40 PM Social
- Light refreshments in the McLaughlin Room

Cell Phone Announcement (Lynch)

Good evening. We will formally begin our program in just a moment, but before we do I want to ask you to join me right now in shutting off your cell phones and any other devices that might detract from our ability to celebrate the accomplishments of our students together. I would also ask that if you choose to take pictures or video during the ceremony that you be mindful of those seated around you. Please remain seated and refrain from blocking anyone else's view of graduation. Thank you for extending these courtesies to one another.

Welcome (Lynch)

Good evening, Parents, Families, Honored Guests, Faculty, Staff, Students and Gentlemen of the Class of 2009. Welcome to the Inaugural Commencement Ceremony for Chicago Jesuit Academy.

My name is Matthew Lynch and for the past four years I have had the privilege of serving the students seated to my right as the president of Chicago Jesuit Academy. Today, we celebrate with them as they make their transition from middle to high school.

As we begin our ceremony, I want to first recognize our graduates' parents. (*Applause*) Four years ago, you courageously entrusted your sons as ten- and eleven-year-olds to a handful of twenty-something teachers. Together, we boldly believed we could build the foundation of an extraordinary new middle school with little

more than three rented classrooms at Marillac House, some donated textbooks and our shared passion. As my amazing wife Nora would tell you, honoring your trust has been the first thought in my mind each morning and my last thought before I have slept each night for the last four years now. Thank you for walking this journey with us. (*Applause*)

Paralleling the bold commitment of our parents is the commitment of our first benefactors, you who believed so deeply in the promise of our first students that you underwrote the cost of each student's scholarship for the last four years. During our first conversations about Chicago Jesuit Academy, I could offer you no track record – no proof that this grand enterprise would work. We had precious little capital. But, together, we had great hope. And we held firmly to our shared belief that our students would accomplish great things if they were simply given what every child rightly deserves: a school in which they are known, loved and called to develop the extraordinary gifts entrusted to them by God. Thank you for your great trust as well. (*Applause*)

Chicago Jesuit Academy opened the same year that a number of other Catholic schools were closed throughout Chicago. We would not be gathered together today in celebration were it not for the courage and creativity of the Jesuits of the Chicago Province –

especially their Provincial, Fr. Edward Schmidt. At a time when “No” would have been the easy and safe answer to a small group of lay people’s incessant requests to start an innovative Jesuit college prep middle school on the West Side as a demonstration project in urban Catholic education, Fr. Schmidt had the courage and the creative vision to say, “Yes.” He backed his “Yes” with a \$1 million gift to support the creation of our new campus on Jackson Boulevard, and the Jesuit communities throughout Chicago have backed his “Yes” with scholarship support for our current students as well as financial aid awards and scholarships to Loyola Academy and St. Ignatius College Prep for many of our graduates.

As the Jesuit priest Anthony de Mello wrote, “Peace is only found in yes.”

And so, having welcomed all of you here today, I can think of no better way to formally begin this evening’s proceeding than to ask Fr. Schmidt to lead us with an opening prayer.

Ladies and gentlemen, Fr. Edward Schmidt...

Invocation (R.P. Edward Schmidt, S.J.)

TBD

Gratitude is the Hallmark of a Gentleman (Lynch)

Thank you, Fr. Schmidt.

Before we honor our graduates this evening, the graduates themselves would like to have the opportunity to recognize three critical groups of people who have made this day possible: their teachers, their benefactors and most importantly their family and true friends.

Mr. Tremaine and Mr. Jaquan will begin with an address to their teachers.

Gentlemen...

Speech to Teachers by Tremaine

The support of the teachers at Chicago Jesuit Academy was much better than that of the teachers at my old school. Since I was struggling at my old school my mother knew it was time to put me in a new school. That's when I discovered CJA.

I am up here to recognize the wonderful and brilliant teachers. First of all, they are very caring. They organized field trips to museum, plays, and to churches. They also created programs like field days and fun days. Lastly they showed us respect as students and as persons. They were never unwilling to listen. They knew the right times to laugh, to hear, and to care; but in class they always focused on our education, and they do a great job of it. We students are better writers, readers, and mathematicians.

Also I would like to say the teachers themselves are great. They went to great colleges and have great degrees. They went to schools such as Notre Dame, James Madison, Villanova, Georgetown, and Boston College. As I worked with each and every teacher I realize that they are representatives of CJA and the values of the school. Jaquan would like to offer several examples of that during his time at CJA.

(Jaquan speaks here.)

Reflection by Jaquan

At the start of Chicago Jesuit Academy, I was very immature and less smart. I thought this school was just about teaching us more difficult things. I quickly learned that, that was not the case. This school challenged me mentally and spiritually.

When I first started, I found that I was going to have to learn five basic things. Those five things are being Open to Growth, Religious, Loving, Intellectually Competent, and Committed to doing Justice.

I was weak at all these things because I didn't know them, but as my time at CJA went on I became more open to these things. That's where I became really open to growth. I was open to coming to this school, meeting new people, and being challenged. It was by the example of my teachers and by their confidence in me that I knew that I could become something better than I was.

From the time when I first got here I quickly learned to respect the power of an education. We learned math, reading, science, and we were challenged by all of it. If that's all I would have learned, however, I would have still been that same immature person I was when I started.

It was my relationship with the teachers and their commitment to CJA values that fell into a sequence. Being open to growth helped me to become more intellectually competent by letting me challenge myself further in my studies. Being intellectually competent helped me to be more loving. I intellectually understand why our teachers do all of this stuff for us: It's because they love us. Being loved opened me to love and respect others. The love and respect helped me to become more religious in understanding that God is always on my side, loving me every step of the way. Lastly, being religious helped me to become more committed to doing justice because doing God's will is truly being a gentleman for others. I stand here with an education and with character. I owe much of this to my teachers and to CJA.

Tremaine continues...

As my mom and dad always said to me if, I want to achieve my goals I have to take that extra step and put forth more effort. Also never settle for average try to be above “B’s” and if I can, try to get all “A’s.” But even though my mom and dad said that I feel I still wouldn’t have done it without the teachers. They helped me get into a college prep high school which is North Lawndale College Prep.

Lastly I would like to thank the teachers for everything they have done for me and my classmates. I understand grammar school has to come to an end, but if I had the chance to continue my work with these teachers in high school, I believe in my heart I could do anything, go anywhere and be a great person for my community. To all of you teachers, faculty, staff, tutors, and volunteers of CJA...

THANK YOU!

Transition to Benefactors (Lynch)

Thank you, Gentlemen.

In addition to the speeches of Mr. Funches and Mr. Grier, the members of the Class of 2009 have written more personalized letters to each of their teachers. Mr. Castleberry, Mr. Hart, Mr. Lacy and Mr. McCoy, would you please give those letters to the faculty and staff now. Thank you, Gentlemen. (*Applause*)

As Tremaine and Jaquan's words made clear, our success at Chicago Jesuit Academy finds its roots in the great people who make extraordinary sacrifices every day to provide our students with the opportunity to earn an excellent education. Very simply, we cannot make this work without great people – this includes the teachers whom we have just acknowledged and our generous benefactors and dedicated parents whom we will recognize in just a moment. We all know that any great school is only as good as its teachers.

For the last four years, our teachers at Chicago Jesuit Academy – the talented men and women seated beside me – have been nothing short of outstanding. They have done great work while earning only 60 to 65% of what they could make as teachers within the

Chicago Public School system. On behalf of everyone assembled here today, I want to publicly acknowledge how grateful we are for your sacrifice and your profound commitment to help each of our students learn and grow as ‘gentlemen for others.’

Today, I am also proud to announce that earlier this week, a member of our board anonymously committed to a \$200,000.00 investment in our school over the next four years so that we can begin to systematically improve the resources we offer you – our teachers – so that you, in turn, can help us take even better care of our students. Our goal is to match our board member’s commitment of \$200,000.00 with other gifts totaling \$200,000.00 to better support you as professional educators and as a concrete recognition of our gratitude to you for your great work.

Students deserve great teachers. To our great teachers, please hear that we want you to be able to work with us for a long time to come. Thank you.

Clearly, we are blessed to have the support of incredibly generous benefactors who believe profoundly in the promise of the young men seated to my right. It is my pleasure to invite Emiliano to the podium now to share his reflection about our benefactors.

Emiliano...

Speech to Benefactors by Emiliano

As we come to the end of a big chapter in CJA history, I think that it's very important for us to remember the beginning and how this all started. Any beginning with CJA has to start with the benefactors. Not only are they extremely generous, but also, in a way, they are a fine example of what a graduate of a Jesuit school should be at graduation. For the benefactors are not only committed to doing justice, but also, thoughtful, loving people who wish to serve people.

Now, the *grad at grad* is a big thing, and you can't call just anyone Open to Growth, Intellectually Competent, Loving, Religious, and Committed to doing Justice, mainly because it's a mouthful, but also because only a great person could be called these, and people like that come in short supply.

That is why we at CJA have been so blessed, because we have so many wonderful people supporting us. But it is in their commitment to doing justice that the benefactors provide us our best example.

Not many people look beyond the differences that every human being has, and instead focus on the similarities, and the potential for greatness that is in each and every one of the students here at CJA. All of the benefactors have done this. They see potential in us and they have acted.

Our benefactors do justice by providing scholarships for each and every one of us. They have poured their resources into creating a building that is a safe and noble place to learn.

All of these actions will result in true justice. Potential shall be realized, communities will be served, wisdom will be passed on.

However, the thing that truly makes them great, is their love, and not just a shallow love of the material or the plastic, but the deep love, that comes with sacrifice and true caring. The Benefactors of CJA give not only money, but their time as well. Some Benefactors come on a weekly basis, and their caring and genuine compassion for the well being of the students, even when they're being difficult, is obvious.

This constant generosity, even in these hard economic times, that have caused so many pain and suffering, is exceptional. The fact that someone can give up so much for what they see in us calls us to greater and greater heights. We intend to meet the many challenges ahead and to pay back the gifts you have provided by following your example.

To our many benefactors, the Chicago Jesuit Academy class of 2009 offers you a sincere and humble thank you.

Transition to Parents (Lynch)

Thank you, Emiliano.

On behalf of the Class of 2009, I would like to ask Matt and Christine Botica to join me at the podium so that we may ask you to accept this plaque on behalf of all of our benefactors.

(Pause to allow Boticas to take the stage.)

This plaque honors both our first graduates and the founding benefactors who sponsored their scholarships. It will hang in the front entryway of our school as a symbol of our great gratitude for your profound generosity and the generosity of all our benefactors.

And may I please ask all of our benefactors with us tonight to please stand so that we may recognize you with a round of applause.

Thank you.

And now, I would like to invite Deon to the podium to recognize our most important partners in this work, the parents of the Class of 2009. Deon...

Speech to Parents by Deon

I cannot say just how much the parents of CJA have affected CJA. There is no one in this audience who can say that parents don't make a difference. They do and they have shown it through the whole four years I've been here. They have helped in many ways: Suggestions, Parent Board, Growth of school, and challenging us to become better. Those four things themselves do not show how much they help. At the same time, Grad at Grad will also be a main way of showing care. My classmates and I think it is our responsibility to acknowledge those things.

Grad at Grad may not be a familiar term for some of you. The Grad at Grad consists of five themes: being Open to Growth, Religious, Intellectually Competent, Committed to doing Justice in the service of others, and Loving. Those five things consist of everything a parent at CJA does and are willing to do frequently. A person who shows these five things deserves serious respect.

A parent at CJA could choose not to care about the students or interact with the school. At CJA, we have parents at who want the best for their sons and are willing to sacrifice for it. This shows a great amount of respect for CJA and you can see it through the things that our parents do. Things like coming to games is one very important thing they do. It may be a small thing to some of us, but really it is important. When a parent comes to a game it not only shows that they care for their child but it shows

that they care for the school. You could look at parents' relationships with other students and see who parents really are. Parents do not have to care about other students, but they do.

Another way you can see just how much love parents' show is through them setting an excellent example for students at CJA. You do not see parents fighting one another over silly things such as whose child is smarter. You can look at a parent at CJA and see that they work it out like civilized people. It takes a respectful and loving person to do that.

Another way you can see how loving parents are is by them challenging and disciplining us. I know a student here might look at me and say I hate when my mom tries to get me back on track or make sure that I am doing my best. But when you really sit down and think about it, it's for the best. When a parent is disciplining a child, the child will most likely not appreciate it at that moment because no one likes being told what to do. It may be painful at the start but in the end you will thank them and respect them because that discipline made us better students. When a parent is disciplining a child, that parent is actually showing a great amount of love for the child.

One of the hardest things to do in life is to be committed to Doing Justice. The parents at CJA have done this through the whole four years. They have done it when they were making sure that we were here at school on time, making sure that

we have what we need for school and most importantly that they never shied away from the justice of tough love no matter how much it hurt them to push us on to be our own men. They taught us to try and build trust, accept the consequences for our mistakes, and use all the gifts that God has given us. They not only teach us to do this but at the same time they set an excellent example of this.

A parent is one of the most important things in a child's life, if there is no parent then it is hard for that child to live well and love. The parents here at CJA show love for their children by helping with homework, talking to them at home, and supporting them through tough times.

I did not like a couple of things at CJA at first: like there were no girls, we had to wear uniforms, and worst of all, we had to be here from 7:30 in the morning to 6:00 o'clock at night. A lot of students do not have to be at school half of the time that we do and it can be really frustrating. I know it was to me. When I was in 5th and 6th grades, I did not like to do what the teacher told me to do because I wanted to do it my way. My parents were there to say that it doesn't go that way and I would say well mom that's not fair. She would say life is not fair and if there is no pain then there is no gain. My parents along with many other parents want the best for us and explain the importance of this. It took me a while to get there just like it will take every other student at CJA a while to get

there but it was all because our parents knew the value of being Intellectually Competent.

I am not a Catholic and I know there many non-Catholics here today. CJA is a Catholic school, and many of our parents supported the religious education we received at CJA regardless of the differences in our faiths. The parents make sure that students are respecting the religion of the school and that the school respects the beliefs of their children. We, students of CJA, go through a lot of things and depend on God. When we depend on God, he tells us that we should depend on our parents too. He tells us that our parents are here to lead and guide us to success. And they do.

Parents at CJA have taught us in many different ways that being open to growth is the key to become who you are meant to be. I know that our parents are older than us and therefore know things that we don't know. This puts us CJA students in the position that we should listen to our parents because they have been through many things that we haven't. They have been through them and had to learn things the hard way, but we have them so we won't have to go through the same things. An example of this is when I was applying to high schools and wanted to apply to only one school because that's the only school I wanted to go to. My Mom sat down and told me that was not the way out because I might not get accepted to that school which, by the way, is Loyola Academy. She told me that I can't depend on one thing for

something all the time; I have to be Open to Growth. I took these words in and saw that they were all true. I applied to more than one school but it turned out that I got accepted to Loyola and will be attending there next year. We have to be willing to be Open to Growth and our parents at CJA have been excellent examples of this quality.

As a student at CJA, I could have never made it this far without my parents. I am sure that our group of 8th graders would say the same. On behalf of the Chicago Jesuit Academy class of 2009, I Deon, offer my heartfelt thanks to all of our parents and families.

Introduction of Video and Mr. Brian Lewis (Lynch)

Thank you, Deon.

Our students have also written personal notes of thanks to their parents. They each have one in their coat pocket, but since our goal for the evening is not to make everyone cry publicly our students plan to pick a private moment later this evening to present their parents with these letters.

I cannot, however, promise that what comes next will not provoke a tear or two. Earlier today, everyone on stage had the opportunity to view a video that we are about to debut. It celebrates our first graduates. In honor of the Class of 2009, we would like to share it with you now.

Cue video (Flynn)

I wasn't kidding about the tears was I?

While that is going to be a very tough act to follow, I have every confidence that our inaugural commencement speaker will be able to do precisely that. I am pleased to introduce as our inaugural commencement speaker, Mr. Brian Lewis, a good friend and a Chicago Jesuit Academy board member. Brian is currently an

Assistant United States Attorney in the San Francisco criminal division. He was formerly a litigation associate at Reed Smith here in Chicago, having focused his practice on intellectual property and product liability matters. Prior to working for Reed Smith, he clerked for the Honorable Richard W. Roberts in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. He holds a law degree from Georgetown, where he was editor-in-chief of the *American Criminal Law Review*. He earned his B.A. from Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, and his high school diploma is from St. Ignatius College Prep where he was also a LINK Scholar.

Brian is tough, smart and – like our current President – he even has a decent jumpshot. More importantly, he has a moral compass that points unyieldingly toward true North. He is a loving husband and the father of a beautiful little girl. When he sees that which is unjust in this world, he takes thoughtful, constructive action. He surrounds himself with good friends who are similarly inclined toward hard work, justice and thoughtful discernment. He is a model of what we ask each our students at Chicago Jesuit Academy to be: He is a gentleman for others in the Jesuit tradition who is open to growth, loving, religious, intellectually competent and committed to doing justice in the service of others.

I am proud to call him my friend.

Ladies and Gentlemen, please welcome Mr. Brian Lewis.

Commencement Address (Mr. Brian Lewis)

Introduction of Grad at Grad Awards (Lynch)

Thank you, Brian.

Ladies and gentlemen, the graduates who sit before you this evening have made no small amount of academic progress during their past four years of study at Chicago Jesuit Academy. In their study of Mathematics and Reading (to take but two subjects as examples of their growth), our first eighth grade class has made more than 7 years of academic progress in only four years of study with us. In 2005, their average grade equivalencies in Mathematics and Reading were 3.8 and 3.6 respectively. Today, as graduating eighth graders, the gentlemen in front of you are testing, on average, at a 10th or an 11th grade level in Reading, Mathematics and Language.

Through their hard work, our first graduates have each earned admission to at least one private, college preparatory high school. Many have earned admission to multiple schools including: the Chicago Waldorf School, Christ the King, Culver Military Academy, Holy Trinity, North Lawndale College Prep, Latin, Loyola Academy, St. Ignatius, the Thatcher School and Walter Payton College Prep. We are incredibly proud of them.

We have every confidence that our first graduates will succeed at these prestigious high schools; that they will go on to earn impressive degrees from outstanding colleges and universities; and that they will be exceptional lawyers, doctors, educators and businessmen.

If that is all that they will be, then Chicago Jesuit Academy will have been a spectacular failure.

For the past four years, we have sought to form each young man in the Class of 2009 as a gentleman for others in the Jesuit tradition – as someone who is called to be open to growth, loving, religious, committed to doing justice and intellectually competent. We ask our students to battle against so much in popular culture that tells them to be self-centered, and instead be other-centered. We ask them to take inspiration from creation and find God in all things. We have also asked them to make countless small sacrifices each day – grinding through 11-hour school days, 11-month school years and hours and hours of homework – so that they might steel themselves for the sacrifices and commitments that they will be called to make in the near future when they find themselves serving as faith-filled leaders of their communities. We have asked them to believe that each of them is built for greatness and that they are called by their God to do great things with the gifts God has entrusted to them.

And so, we present the following five special awards to recognize the five students in the Class of 2009 who have been extraordinary in their embodiment of what it means to be a Graduate at Graduation at Chicago Jesuit Academy. The recipients of these awards will be the first of our graduates to have their names etched upon this plaque, which will record the recipients of the Grad at

Grad awards this year and for years to come. Mr. Diehl, our dean of students and our lead Mathematics teacher will present our first Grad at Grad award to the student who has best exemplified being Open to Growth. He will be followed by Mr. Jones who will give out the award for being Loving; Mr. Beckley, who will give out the award for being Religious; Mr. Dwyer, who will recognize a student's Commitment to Doing Justice in the Service of Others; and Ms. Carter, who will recognize our honoree for Intellectual Competence.

Mr. Diehl...

Open to Growth presented by Mr. David Diehl

There is a quote in front of my room that states “Intelligence is not a fixed trait.” It implies the importance of always looking to grow; that it is not always about competing with others, but sometimes competing with one’s self, pushing one’s self to improve. That is a person’s most important gift to God.

From his first year in Mathematics, this gentleman was willing to do extra work because he was interested in learning more. He would participate in every way possible while challenging himself with course work well above his grade level. In Mathematics and Science classes, he asked some of the most thought provoking questions I have heard as a teacher – inspiring me to start a collection of his and his classmates’ questions, a collection that can still be found in my room. He even started a phrase that has caught on with younger classmates when they are called on, “I have two questions...”, which sometimes morphed into, “I have three questions...” – I remember once I even heard “I have four questions...”. The greatest thing about these questions is that he asked simply because he wanted to know.

When he first came to CJA, he had a bad habit of saying “Huh?” whenever he did not understand something another said. He has since taken on the more educated sounding “Excuse me” or “May you please repeat that.”

As a basketball player, I remember being asked by one of our coaches at one point late in our 6th grade championship season, “Where did he come from?” when this gentleman was seen scoring inside and pulling down some important rebounds. This is something he did not do early in the year. Yet, he worked hard in practice. He did what the coach asked. He wanted to get better. I hear that even in his eighth grade year, he was asking to stay after practice to work on a move. This gentleman is worthy of this award because he believes that he can improve. He knows that his traits are not fixed. He is open to growth. The award for being Open to Growth goes to Jerrod.

Loving presented by Mr. Quincy Jones

There are occasions in teaching when the student becomes the teacher and the teacher the student. While these moments are sometimes few and fleeting, students and teachers alike gaze at the example that emanates from these moments. As rare as these moments are, it has been amazing to witness the continued shining light of this particular student. On occasions too numerous to count, I have witnessed this student continue to adhere to the Grad at Grad values: open to growth, intellectually competent, religious and committed to doing justice. I omitted loving in my list because he, more than any other student, exemplifies this quality. Whether it be volunteering to be the last student to receive his lunch or picking up fallen papers from a younger student in the hallway, he is the ultimate representative of this value. There is a popular Persian poem that reads,

Even after all this time

The sun never says to the earth, "You owe me."

Look what happens with a love like that!

—It lights the whole sky.

In his four years at Chicago Jesuit Academy, he has enlightened us with his gifts, none more so than the gift of love. He is the embodiment of the Grad at Grad value of Loving.

Congratulations, Charles.

Religious presented by Mr. Thomas Beckley

The great cornerstone of the old Resurrection Parish Church has dominated the entrance to Chicago Jesuit Academy for the better part of the 2008-2009 academic year. Inscribed on the stone is the passage from Job, which reads, "I know that my redeemer lives." It is a statement of faith that rises above scientific knowledge and the cynicism of this age. How great a challenge to the young man is it, in our day and age, to accept that faith as fact? How counter-cultural it is to prefer religious truth to the overwhelming trends of an increasingly secular society. And in accepting that his Redeemer lives, one young man has opened himself to all the characteristics of the *Graduate of a Jesuit School at Graduation*.

His religious faith keeps him open to the journey ahead and the lessons on the way. His faith makes him not only a gentleman, but also a truly loving soul who puts himself, daily, at the service of others. It is in his conviction that this life is only the beginning of an eternal way, that he never loses hope at the momentary setback or loss. No matter how many challenges have faced this young man, he has lived the idea of becoming a gentleman for others with love, hope, integrity and faith. As an example of what it means to be Religious, we offer this award to Maurice.

Committed to Doing Justice presented by Mr. Chris Dwyer

When I was in high school, one of my teachers explained for me his idea of what it meant to grow up. “As infants,” he said, “All our attention is focused on the self. We are belly-button gazers. As we grow, we gain the ability to look outwards, and see the needs of others.” Now many people never achieve this. At moments, all of us are belly-button gazers, selfishly attending only to our desires. But here at CJA, we believe people are called to something more, to an awareness of and attention to the needs of others. To be committed to justice means to progress toward this ideal.

This gentleman has shown impressive growth in his awareness of others. This student has taken several initiatives to improve the school, demonstrating an understanding of the needs of the CJA community. He showed admirable talent on the basketball court, but whether it was practice, during a game, or in conversations on the bus to and from the games, he made clear that his team was most important. The number of points he scored, and even winning or losing, though vital, were less important than the good of the team. In Religion class in our discussions of social justice, he is an outspoken advocate of the rights of people who are marginalized. In Science class, he routinely brings up questions

about the environment. Many of us were also impressed by his leadership during the black history program. In addition to all these tangible things, this student on a daily basis, shows concern for people around him.

In recognition of these accomplishments, I am proud to present Donzell with the award for being Committed to Doing Justice.

Intellectually Competent presented by Ms. Caela Carter

To be intellectually competent and about to enter ninth grade, you should be making good choices about your education—each of our graduates has done that in choosing to go to a college preparatory high school. You should be regularly putting effort into studying and homework. You should be able to apply critical skills to answering those tough questions that your teachers pose—How can we help the environment? What is the real meaning of The True Story of Hansel and Gretel? Why do we have to learn Algebra? And all of our graduates are able to do this as well. However, one young man here today significantly exceeds the expectation for intellectual competence in 8th or even 9th graders. For this student, critical thinking is not a skill or even a practice, but a hobby. He cannot help but lucidly attempt to articulate the answers to any question he comes across, from the small problems such as the length of the side of a triangle to the infinite mysteries such as why we are on this earth in the first place. He makes connections and poses questions that cause even his teachers to ponder more deeply. In learning the meaning for the word “husk”—as in “husk of an ear of corn”—this young man once asked “So, is the body like a husk for the soul?” This student has achieved greatly in his academic career at Chicago Jesuit Academy, but what we can put on paper in grades and test scores

does not begin to summarize his vastly comprehensive intellectual life. We are confident that these incalculable talents will manifest themselves to the world at large when he becomes a great philosopher or scientist or writer. Or whatever else his intelligence allows himself to dream up.

I am proud to present the award for Intellectual Competence to Diaquan.

Conferring of Diplomas

Ladies and gentlemen, it is now my pleasure to invite Mr. Dave Diehl, Mr. Quincy Jones and Ms. Lauren Hogel to recognize the graduates of the Class of 2009. Mr. Diehl, Mr. Jones and Ms. Hogel have all taught the Class of 2009 since they were fifth graders. As each graduate's name is called, Dr. Kevin Zajdel, our principal, Ms. Catherine Cassidy, our vice president of operations & development and I will present each graduate with his diploma, an academic planner for his first year of high school, a book that has been selected for him by the members of the Chicago Jesuit Academy faculty and a ribbon from our Parents Organization.

We would ask for your polite applause for each student in recognition of his diligent study and his accomplishments throughout the past four years.

Diehl: Mr. Malik Brooks-Payne

Jones: Mr. Jerrod James Castleberry

Hogel: Mr. Tremaine Le'Marcus Funches

Diehl: Mr. Kendall Phillip Grady

Jones: Mr. Jaquan Michael Grier

Hogel: Mr. Maurice Demar Hart

Diehl: Mr. Charles Davion Jones

Jones: Mr. Diaquan Deon King

Hogel: Mr. Damarcus Romello Lacy

Diehl: Mr. Maurice McCoy, Jr.

Jones: Mr. Donzell Andrew Purnell

Hogel: Mr. Deon Taylor

Diehl: Mr. Emiliano Ricardo Vargas-Cruz

Jones: Mr. Johnnie Womack III

Hogel: Mr. Andrew David Wright III

Congratulations, Gentlemen.

(Applause)

Before we close our inaugural commencement ceremony, I would ask that we take one final moment together for a closing prayer.

At Chicago Jesuit Academy, we know that through prayer we are able to remind ourselves that we are constantly in the presence of God. Through prayer, we also seek to quiet ourselves so that we can listen for God's voice in our lives and hear how we are being called to put ourselves at the service of our God and one another.

For the last four years, the Class of 2009 has regularly prayed St. Ignatius's Prayer of Generosity together. You can find this prayer on the back of your program. It speaks to an orientation toward the world that we aspire to as faith-filled people who are open to growth, loving, religious, intellectually competent and committed to doing justice. Let us pray together...

Prayer of Generosity

Dear Lord, teach me to be generous.

Teach me to serve you as you deserve.

To give and not to count the cost,

To fight and not to heed the wounds,

To toil and not to seek for rest,

To labor and not to ask for any reward

Save that of knowing that I am doing your will.

Amen.

Thank you. After the recessional, I hope you will join us in the McLaughlin Room, which is immediately to our south, for refreshments and celebration with our graduates. Our sixth- and seventh-grade student ambassadors will kindly show you the way.

Presentation of the Class of 2009 (Lynch)

And with that, ladies and gentlemen, please join me in a round of applause as I present to you the first alumni of Chicago Jesuit Academy, the gentlemen of the Class of 2009.

Congratulations, Gentlemen. (*Applause*)

(*Cue recessional music*)

(Class of 2009 processes out)

(Faculty & Staff process out)