

Ben Asdell

Valedictorian

Class of 2018

Chancellor Lentz, Mrs. Fleming, Dr. Hollowell, Mr.

Weisenbach, faculty, parents, guests, friends, and members of the Class of 2018, thank you for being here today. It is an honor to be able to reflect on these past four years and send this amazing class on the journey ahead. And before we begin, I believe I can proudly claim the record for the first person with an afro to speak at this podium. Although now I realize that was probably a mistake.

When I think about my time at Roncalli with all of you, I think about the growth of a tree. (short pause) We started this

path by planting a seed, an idea that “We are all in this together.” This principle formed the roots for the close bonds of friendship and class unity that I have witnessed. We have supported each other in all our endeavors, from athletics to academic extracurriculars to concerts. Looking back, I cannot remember a single event in which the bleachers, the auditorium, or the family room was not packed with members of our class. Still, I think our high school years deserve a brief reflection.

As freshmen, we transitioned into learning independently, developing good habits for working and collaborating in later life, and having to deal with tight schedules and even tighter deadlines. We learned to overcome our grade school prejudices and loyalties, although Collin apparently still holds something against us Barnabas alumni. We learned about Roncalli, its

rules, its myths, and which teachers would wait outside the cafeteria just to take away your milkshake.

As sophomores, we found our rhythm, taking on a little responsibility as members of our class became prominent members of the Roncalli community. Some of our class' best football players became extremely proficient at setting up and taking down those famous white chairs in the gym. As a class, we watched fervently as our classmates helped to win a state baseball championship.

As juniors, we matured into our roles as upperclassmen, becoming integral leaders of our school. On the field, we found our classmates being a crucial part of a state championship football team. Our academic extracurricular teams excelled with many of our classmates at the helm.

Then came senior year. This past year, we have transformed. As the leaders of our school, we became the face of Roncalli to the underclassmen and to the world. Seniors from the Class of 2018 have led nearly every extracurricular activity on campus. We excelled in the classroom, graduating seven National Merit Finalists, and dominated in a plethora of statewide contests from architecture to economics to art and music. And just recently, we brought home the first boys' volleyball state title in school history. (pause) This year, we grew as friends and as individuals as we discovered ourselves, each other, and God on Senior Retreat. Throughout this year, we have identified who we are, what path we want to take in life, and what values we will hold dear during the next phase of our journey.

And so, I present to you, the Class of 2018, a challenge: seek the truth. Search for it, do not let it be handed to you. The road ahead of you is lengthy and treacherous. Along the way, there will be people who try to misinform you. There will be lies, exaggerations, and “fake news” that are intended to prevent you from learning about yourself, about the world, and about God. There will be people who doubt you and what you can do. Outside of this friendly, supportive Roncalli community, there will be people who attack your values, faith, and character. Show them not only that you can know yourself, but be yourself. I can confidently say that all of you are magnificent and capable people. Only you know your truths. Only you know what songs you sing in the shower, what Netflix shows you love but are embarrassed to tell anyone, and what other quirky secrets you

keep hidden in the dark. It is these truths that nurture you, make you unique, and provide reason for undertaking this sojourn called life.

Four years ago, my sister stood at this podium and addressed her class with a valediction, a farewell. I, on the other hand, am not saying goodbye. Yes, in just a few short months, we will all find a new branch of this journey for ourselves. Some of us will be attending college far away and on their own, while others will find themselves closer to home. Nevertheless, no distance can overcome the fellowship that we have forged these past four years. No amount of separation can divide what God has brought together. It is common for this community to refer to itself as the Roncalli family, and as true as that may be, it could not be more exemplified by the class of 2018. Although

this may be the end of our journey here at Roncalli, there is always that famous proverb to remember: don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened. We will always have these memories. We will always have each other.

Once again I would like to express my sincerest gratitude not only for this privilege of speaking in front of you, but also for these remarkable past four years. Thank you to my parents, Steve and Tessa, for always pushing me to reach higher standards, for teaching me the value of my education so early in my life, and for showing me the definition of love each and every day. Thank you to my sister, Stephanie, for being a role model and a motivator in my life, and for being the closest thing to a rival while at the same time my best friend. Without your support and the high standard you set for me, I might have never

made it here. To all of the teachers, faculty, and staff who made these years enjoyable for both me and my classmates, I thank you. And finally, to the Class of 2018, remember my challenge to you. Remember that the truth is not what you see at first glance, or what others want you to believe. Remember that sometimes the only person who can find the truth, especially about yourself and about your faith, is you. Together, we have grown so far and so tall; it is now time for us to use our own truths, our own power to reach new heights.