

Barry University Commencements
President's Remarks
May 5, 2012
10 am and 2:30 pm ceremonies

Dear graduates, before conferring your degrees, I have to tell you that I never thought this day would come, and not for the reasons you might think.

For at least two years, I knew we would be here to celebrate your graduation on May 5. However, when I graduated from Barry College for Women on June 5, I never thought that I would be here today serving you and my Alma Mater as president and conferring your degrees. That was fifty years ago this year. Where did the years go?

Unlike the thoughts I have shared with graduates at previous commencement ceremonies over the last eight years, I want to share seven insights I have gained by looking back while looking at you - what I know now that I did not know then – in the style of David Letterman.

Number 7 As we age, time flies by more quickly, so live in the present moment.

Get up every day with the intent to live that day fully. Think of each day as a gift that you are going to enjoy unwrapping.

Number 6 Failures and disappointments do not crush us.

They often can be the most fertile soil for our growth and development. A newspaper editor fired Walt Disney because the editor claimed, “he lacked imagination and had no good ideas.” Walt Disney went bankrupt several times before he finally built Disneyland in California.

Thomas Edison made one thousand (**1,000**) unsuccessful attempts at inventing the light bulb. Obviously, he eventually got it right.

My favorite Coach of the Miami Dolphins, Don Shula, put it this way - “Success is never final, and failure is never fatal.”

Number 5 Dream.

We often create our future by what we dream. If you do not already have a favorite quiet space, find one. Give yourself a sacred space to be quiet, to dream, to think of the “what ifs.” Shut out the noise, turn off the cell phone, and tell the fingers not to tweet or text.

Then, do something about your dreams. They will not come true unless we wake up and get to work. And another thing, do not be disappointed if all your dreams do not come true. Just be glad your nightmares do not.

Number 4 Be open to suggestions, advice and criticism.

One of our senior Adrian Dominican Sisters told me when I was a very young sister, “Look for the kernel of truth in every criticism you receive and be open to learn from it.” I know that Sister Marie Grace was right, and that she shared her wisdom with me for my good because she loved me.

Number 3 Never stop learning.

Learning must be the daily nourishment for your continuous growth and development. Whether enrolled in formal coursework, pursuing another degree or not, I hope that you will always have a voracious appetite to keep learning, searching for the truth – small t and capital T, so that you will grow not only in knowledge but in wisdom. You had powerful examples of that in the number of graduates receiving a master and doctoral degree today.

Number 2 and Number 1, I learned as a young child and they have served me well all my life.

Number 2 Give away smiles.

Our world desperately needs people who smile. It is certainly one thing we all have in common, isn't it? We all smile in the same language. Give away smiles – they're free. It is the one thing we wear that we did not have to buy. The return could be amazing. You may disarm the grumps and grouches of the world, and you may get a smile back.

Number 1 The most important one for me - Pause for prayer.

In addition to beginning and ending each day with praise and gratitude to our loving Creator, pause during the day. Stopped at a red light - say a little a prayer. Exercising - thank God for your family. Washing your car – thank the Creator for the beauty of creation. In other words, use the ordinary moments of your day to pause to pray. If you do, you will never feel or be alone.

I hope that fifty years from now, when I am here only in spirit, there will be another Barry graduate serving this incredibly wonderful university community and preparing, as I am now, to confer degrees on an equally marvelous group of graduates.

Trust me, graduates, the years will fly by quickly.

In your name, I want to thank all the members of the Commencement Committee for planning this celebration and all of the volunteers who have seen to our needs this morning/afternoon. I also want to acknowledge and thank Barry's outstanding faculty and staff who journeyed with you and are rejoicing in your success today.

After I confer your degrees, graduates, please remain standing for the final blessing and the singing of the Alma Mater.

While sharing your knowledge and skills in your future endeavors, may you always reflect Barry's mission and core commitments. May God keep you safe from all harm and fill you, your family and your home with abiding peace and true happiness.

It is now my pleasure and privilege to confer upon you the degree that you have earned, and with great joy, confidence and pride, to offer you as one of Barry University's 2012 gifts to our world.

Will the candidates for graduation please rise?

On behalf of the faculty, the Deans have attested to the worthiness of the candidates presented this morning/afternoon and those in absentia who have successfully completed all requirements for graduation. Therefore, by the authority vested in me by the Barry University Board of Trustees, I hereby confer the degrees announced this fifth day of May in the year 2012.

Congratulations, dear graduates! We are very proud of you. As your president and a very proud Barry alumna, I join Smilka Melgoza in welcoming you into the Barry University Alumni Association.

Remember - always be Barry proud!

Sister Linda Bevilacqua, OP, PhD
President