

Campion College Graduation

Monday, 09 March 2009

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Olivia Meese delivered the valedictory address for the inaugural graduation class at Australia's first Liberal Art's college.

The Honorable Jason Clare, representing the Prime Minister of Australia, Mr. Kevin Rudd; my Lord Bishop Kevin Manning; Mr. Joe DeBruyn, Chairman of the Campion Institute Board; Dr. David Daintree, Acting-President of Campion College; distinguished guests; fellow graduates; ladies and gentlemen. It is with a great sense of pride that I address you as a graduate of the inaugural class of Campion College, as one of the first of what I am sure will become a long line of students whose desperate search for an authentic Catholic education is successfully ended at the College. When the graduates you see before you first came to Campion in February 2006, each one of us had made a conscious decision to support a fledgling institution in its first year of operation. From the outset we were affectionately dubbed the guinea pigs – those few who were game enough to take the gamble of pursuing an education that was untried, untested and unlike any other in Australia. Despite the uncertainty with which many of us arrived, I am sure I speak on behalf of all my fellow graduates in saying how exceedingly well our gamble has paid off. At Campion College we have received an education that is, quite simply, second to none. We have been avid witnesses to the development of Western Civilisation, from its democratic beginnings in Ancient Greece, through its medieval and Renaissance eras, right up to the Enlightenment and the current period of modernity. Our studies in History, Philosophy, Theology, Literature and Science – from ancient to modern times– have provided the contextual basis necessary to adequately and fruitfully examine and understand the state in which we find ourselves today. Indeed, in the last three years, we have come a long way in understanding who we are, how we are and the reasons we have come to be so, an understanding which is no doubt crucial to any attempt to make a positive difference to society in the future. The academic program at Campion is of a truly high standard; a standard which does not permit or encourage the mere memorising of historical facts, dates and ideas, but rather demands that all students study and question and ultimately come to understand those ideas. Through our study of the liberal arts, we have learnt to read, comprehend, and understand, in order that we may ultimately celebrate those great ideas which have stood the test of time, and to logically and rationally counter those which have not. In short, we have been taught how to think. For such an invaluable gift there are many to whom the graduating class is sincerely grateful. Firstly, we offer our heartfelt gratitude to the founders of the College – to those remarkable individuals who not only recognised the terrible void in Australian tertiary education, but had the vision, drive and perseverance to do something about it. To Campion’s academic and administrative staff, who, like us, took a gamble supporting the founders’ vision. Your intelligence, humility and genuine interest in the students is greatly admired and appreciated. To the numerous benefactors, donors and supporters of the College; without your foresight and faith in the tremendous value of a Catholic liberal arts education, none of this would have been possible. Your generous support is truly humbling – and we assure you of our intentions to reward your faith and generosity in all our future endeavours. To all those who have contributed in any way to the idyllic campus we enjoyed for the last three years; we are truly fortunate to have studied, and for many of us, to have lived in such a unique and peaceful oasis of Christian culture. To our parents and families, without whose love, guidance and support most of us would not be graduating today. And finally to my fellow graduates; in one another we have found a great witness not only to the Catholic faith but also to the pursuit of the Truth and the advancement of the intellect. To study and live with other young men and women who not only share the same convictions but also endeavour to incorporate them into their lives has been a defining experience of which I am immensely grateful. May we bear witness to the great partnership between faith and reason, and the Church’s record as an “overwhelming force for good in the world”, as the Prime Minister did at the recent World Youth Day. May we join him in honouring “the great Catholic heritage of Australia”, and together confront and defy society’s secularism, the callous disregard it shows for the sanctity of human life, the dignity of the person, and the importance of the family, and the snarling contempt it so often shows towards Christianity. As the first graduates of Campion College, we lucky guinea pigs have had the privilege to help shape its developing life, its traditions, and the greatness for which the College will, undoubtedly, come to be known. We thank God for the immense blessings he has bestowed upon us, and pray for and look forward to the College’s continuing success.